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One of John Trevelyan's most recent paintings, "Honfleur" (1985) is on show at Waterman's Art Centre, 40 High Street, Brentford, Middlesex, in the exhibition, *John Trevelyan: A first retrospective* until February 25.

TLS February 7 1986 SCIENCE

A timely catalyst

John North

BRIAN HARPUR
The Official Halley's Comet Book
1984pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.95.
0340345110

ANDREA CARUSI and GIOVANNI B. VALSECCHI (Editors)
Dynamics of Comets: Their origin and evolution
1985pp. Dordrecht: Reidel. Hf165
017720479

FRED L. WHIPPLE
The Mystery of Comets
276pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.95.
0521324408

ALBERT VAN HELDEN
Measuring the Universe: Cosmic dimensions from Aristarchus to Halley
200pp. University of Chicago Press. £31.50.
022648817

JACK MEADOWS
Space Garbage: Comets, meteors and other solar-system debris
160pp. George Philip. £7.95.
05400871

BRUCE MARTEN (Editor)
Halley's Comet, 1755-1984: A bibliography
280pp. Greenwood Press. £43.50.
031320222

ROBERTA EITER and STUART SCHNEIDER
Halley's Comet: Memories of 1910
96pp. Pandemic. £14.95.
080493889

H. G. WELLS
In the Days of the Comet
240pp. Hogarth. £3.95.
070105806

The dust that falls to earth after those short-lived meteor showers which mark our passage through the trails of comets is as nothing to what will soon begin to descend on booksellers' shelves of remanufactured, in the wake of comet Halley. Comets have been kind to publishers since the earliest days of printing, but Edmund Halley changed the whole nature of the game. Before him, comets took the world by surprise, and were above all an astrological property; after him, they were material objects subject to Newton's laws of motion, and those who traded on apprehension and fear were obliged to shift their stance. After Halley it became a question of calculating whether a comet would collide with the Earth. Would it, perhaps, introduce a poisonous gas into our atmosphere? (Cyanogen was the 1910 favourite.)

Books suggesting that such things might happen are currently with us again - though none is on the list above - and are ephemeral by design, rather than by lack of merit. The same has to be said of books whose chief purpose is to describe the sort of spectacle we may expect. Most books of this sort are written in apparent ignorance of the story of the boy who cried wolf. The comet will "blaze across the sky", as several publishers have been assuring us vaguely for months, judiciously avoiding all the best evidence, not to mention the opinions expressed by their authors. In any case, it takes more to astonish us than it did: Westland helicopters notwithstanding, press, radio and television are full of Halley's comet, and if there is ever a publishers' inquest into the demise of the goose that lays the golden egg, the verdict is likely to be "death from boredom".

Both Halley and the comet deserve better. It was he who first recognized a series of cometary records from various epochs as evidence for a single entity. Although much credit goes to him for his discovery, one should forget neither the long tradition of recording cometary positions, on which it rested, nor the mathematical theory published by Isaac Newton (1687) that Halley used in the early 1700s to determine, with "a prodigious deal of calculation", the elements of the orbits of more than a score of different comets. Newton had used the comet of 1680 as his example. Halley was struck by the similarities between the calculated orbits of the comets seen in 1531, 1607, and 1682. He postulated a single cause, and suggested that it should manifest itself again in 1758. (He later revised this estimate to late 1758 or early 1759.)

By the time he came to this conclusion, his comet had been recorded, as we now know, at fairly regular intervals over a period of more

than two millennia. What must surely be counted as the most fortunate discovery of recent years in this connection are Babylonian cuneiform tablets, at present on exhibition in the British Museum. As told in an "exclusive" in Brian Harpur's *Official Halley's Comet Book*, a gap in the records was filled when Richard Stephenson of Durham asked Hermann Hunger of Vienna whether he knew of Babylonian observations comparable with the Chinese. Hunger searched the papers of the late Abe Sachs, and found records for the appearance of Halley's comet in 164 bc in no fewer than three different tablets. To Harpur, the discovery of the vital link within a mile or so of where Halley was born "seems to stretch the arm of coincidence out of its socket". His love of coincidence encourages him to draw up a series of significant episodes in world history that have coincided - give or take a few years - with the comet's return. It ends with the birth of Richard Nixon in 1913, only three years after the 1910 return. There, presumably, goes the other arm.

The comet's first appearance after Halley's prediction was indeed in 1759, its return was a prime test, not only of the original prediction, but of a more elaborate mathematical analysis that had been offered by A. C. Clairaut a year or so before. At last, the comet had really come into its own as a phenomenon of scientific concern. Since then, it has been back three times: in 1835, in 1910, and now. On each return, the scientific world has risen to the occasion. One can have an International Year of the Squirrel at the drop of a hat, but it makes sense to concentrate the mind on an important comet when it is in the neighbourhood. No profession has a stronger urge than the astronomical to confer at precisely chosen intervals, and cometary visitations make a change from centuries. In fact one of the enduring things about Halley's comet is that it returns roughly once in a lifetime. Mark Twain noted that he had arrived with the 1835 apparition. With his imitable sense of timing, he left with that of 1910.

The proceedings of a Rome conference, *Dynamics of Comets*, edited by Andrea Carusi and Giovanni B. Valsecchi, give a comprehensive account of the present state of knowledge, as to cometary origins, meteor streams, gravitational and other forces that determine their motions. They give, too, something that astronomers in 1910 could leave to the imagination of such as H. G. Wells - an idea of the planning

of the several space missions aimed at comet Halley. A fuller and more recent account of them, very well illustrated, will be found in Fred L. Whipple's *The Mystery of Comets*.

The orbits of comets around the Sun are a small but important part in Albert van Helden's well-written general history of changing ideas on cosmic dimensions, *Measuring the Universe*. Although he ends his account with Halley, he points out that there were people alive in 1700 who had first learned all that they knew on this score from the Ptolemaic scheme. Halley's contemporaries had learned that the distance from Earth to Sun was greater than Ptolemy had thought, by a factor of about sixteen, and distances within the solar system were tolerably well known by the time he announced that the path for the comet of 1682 had amounted to forty times the distance the old astronomers had assigned to the fixed stars, and four times the distance even then assigned to Saturn at its furthest.

Comets are still known to us because they orbit the Sun, but they come in from distances far greater than Halley ever dreamed, and from all directions. These facts suggested to the Dutch astronomer Jann Oort the existence of a vast cloud of comets, with perhaps as many in it as there are stars in our Galaxy. (Nearly a hundred named examples are separately discussed in *Dynamics of Comets*, and as though to show that astronomers on the whole disapprove of stars Hollywood-style, Encke's comet is mentioned as often as Halley's.) Since our Sun, however, has passed a number of times round the Galaxy, with its own considerably larger giant clouds of gas and dust, would such an "Oort cloud" not have been stripped away, had it ever existed? Do comets in fact come from the nebula out of which the Sun was formed, or are they drawn from that vast reservoir, the supposedly cometary cloud, extending at its distance of the nearest stars? The Rome conference proceedings show that there is plenty of room for lively controversy on these points.

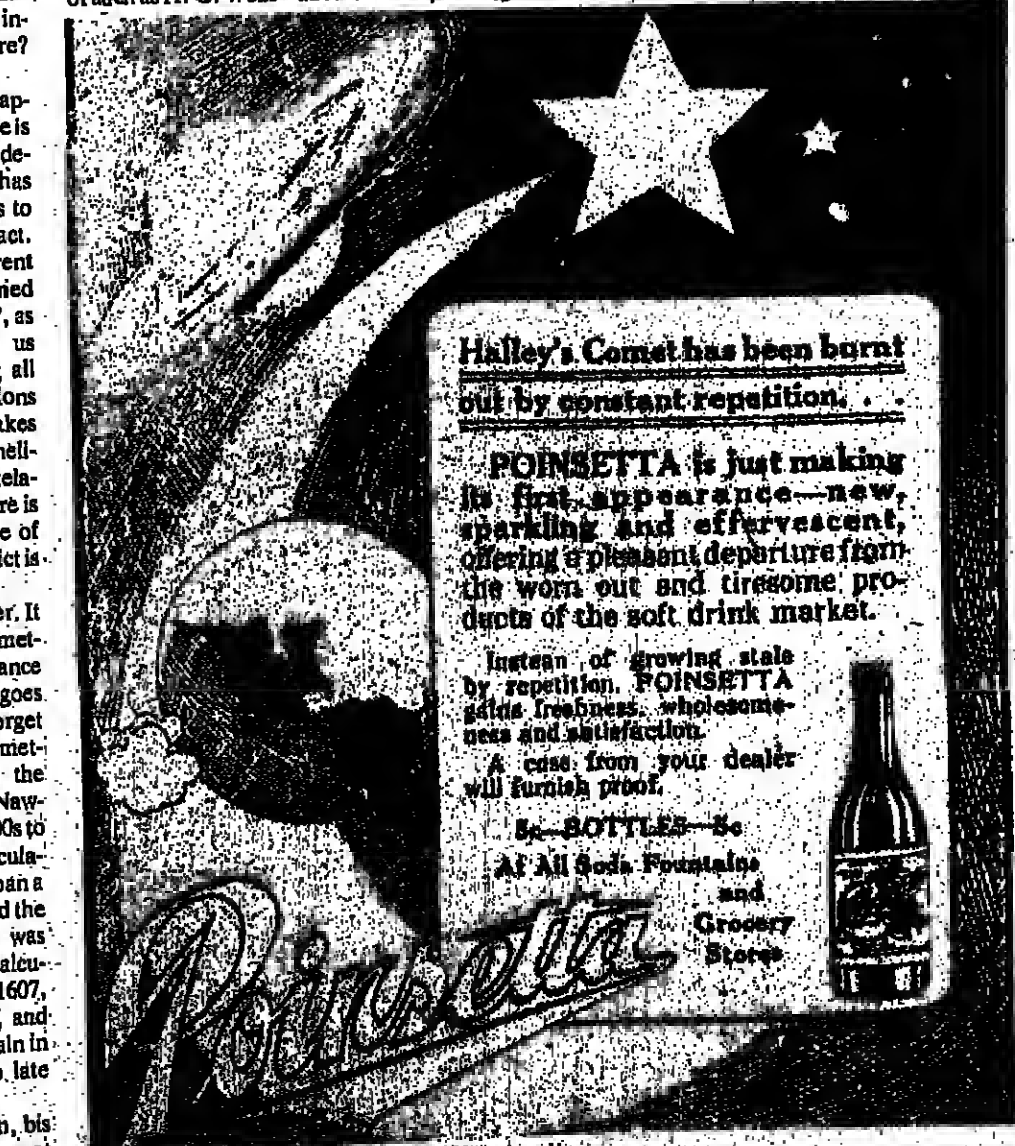
Two very clear and concise elementary introductions to such matters will be found in both Whipple's and the equally aptly illustrated book by Jack Meadows. Meadows does not take his title, *Space Garbage*, from the book trade: it refers rather to the meteorites, asteroids, comets, meteors and interplanetary dust that remained after the planets and their satellites were formed. He likens himself to an

archaeologist, sifting through rubbish to piece together the early history of the solar system and beyond. By contrast, most of the popular books brought into being by the comet in the last year or two have been megabooks of information, compounded rather than sifted - a snippet of two of Halley biography, a few scraps of social history, which is to say the odd newspaper-cutting and a picture postcard or two, a smidgen of science, and information on the Giotto mission, courtesy of the Dynamics Group, British Aerospace. If *The Official Halley's Comet Book* falls into this category, it scores over much of the opposition simply because it has been compiled with enormous zest. It must have been written as the presses were turning. Harpur registered Halley's Comet Limited as long ago as 1975, with charitable intent. His evident love for the comet is such that he would bottle and sell it if he could.

What seems to me the best of the new books for the general reader, however, is Whipple's *The Mystery of Comets*, written with the help of Daniel Green. Whipple is a retired Harvard Professor of Astronomy whose qualifications include the discovery of no fewer than six comets in twelve years. For some peculiar reason, perhaps out of deference to Halley, his publisher has refrained from mentioning that fact on the dust-jacket. The book includes a dash of history (apart from what now seems to be a permanent feature of Cambridge University Press books, namely a comprehensive history of the Press on the title-page). Not the least interesting bit is Whipple's sketch of how he arrived at his own highly influential account of the origin and nature of comets, based on the so-called "dirty-snowball" theory. Among the various phenomena he managed to explain on the basis of his model was the way comets seem reluctant to conform with Newton's law of gravity. The reason, he found, is that the "snowball" at the head of the comet, when in sunlight, boils off gas on the side towards the Sun, and acts as a sort of jet engine. A. D. Dubiago in the Soviet Union had been trying out similar ideas when he put forward his theory. It is a curious fact that that was all in the late 1940s, the Golden Age of the jet engine.

Like Halley's comet itself, the books it has spawned in such numbers convey - at least to the historian - a distinct sense of *déjà vu*. Not in every respect, of course. No theatre producer in 1910 had an audience so captive, if not captivated, as the television audience in 1986. For more than a year it has been possible to buy cometary graphics for your home computer (there are at least three programs on the market), another privilege unknown in 1910. There must surely have been comet pop-up books then. They are happily still around, and although they do not exalt the Spirit of the Age, are likely to be less frustrating than things that do. Time will tell, but it is doubtful whether the comet's social impact in 1986 will quite compare with that of 1910. As readers of Bruce Morton's annotated bibliography, *Halley's Comet 1755-1984* will be able to discover, more than 800 published items - varying from vaguely popular articles to weighty monographs - appeared on the theme between 1905 and 1914. Since his book is more or less restricted to the English language, and has a heavy American bias, that number clearly represents only the tip of the iceberg. While the United States in 1910 seems to have been second to none in the way of alarmism - Comet Cocktail and Cyanogen Flip were at the other extreme of social response - one has to turn perhaps to France for the comet's most stylish literary and artistic reception, and to Germany for works of the deadliest seriousness. The whole subject will sooner or later be discovered for what it is, an unlimited source of post-deconstructivist literary theses.

The trade in artefacts has far to go before catching up with that of 1910. Has the cutting of cometary diamonds yet begun? In Haiti in 1910 one could buy voodoo comet pills - one to be taken each hour, until such time as the comet began to recede from the Earth. In New York in the same year, dealers in telescopes sold more in three months than they had until then since the Civil War. Come March, will the Japanese optical industry crack up under the strain? At a humbler level, the postcard, alas, is not what it was, as we are reminded by Roberta Eiter and Stuart Schneider's lavishly illustrated *Halley's Comet: Memories of*



Taken from Halley's Comet: Memories of 1910, reviewed here

1910. My impression is that poster futures are firm, but that 1986 is unlikely to match, for sheer economic consequence, the printing of 277,000 posters by the Christian Literature Society of China in 1910. No one should doubt that comets do affect human destiny.

Before Halley's time, comets were like V2s, alarming only as they arrived. Halley put our anxieties on a firmer footing. As early as 1755, three years or so before the returning comet was actually seen, John Wesley pondered the consequences of a collision with our planet. The Earth, he thought, would be set on fire and would burn like a coal. Among many letters to the *Gentleman's Magazine* that took a different view was a censorious one which spoke of the "cruelty of terrifying weak minds with groundless pains". Even so it was a strong mind, facing the prospect of being enveloped in the comet's tail, that took comfort in the thought that the heavens declare the glory of God. Of course nothing happened, and the 1835 return – by contrast with those before and after it – seems to have been greeted by a less anxious public. Not that it was unimpressed. Devotees of the Brontës will not need to be reminded of the poem on the subject that appeared from the pen of the Rev Patrick Brontë in the second number of *The Bradfordian*, twenty-six years after the event. There was also Tennyson's "Herald" of 1877, but this should not be allowed to count, since he introduced a deliberate anachronism, just to make a point about how credulous were those who lived in the time of Edward the Confessor. He should have lived to experience the 1910 affair, heralded by H. G. Wells's *In the Days of the Comet* (1906).

The novel illustrates Wells's favourite blend of lower-middle-class social allegory and scientific romance. In *The Days of the Comet* is not one of his better-known works, but it bears comparison with the more successful *Tono-Bungay* (1909) for its portrayal of the imagined collapse of the rich, entrepreneurial, English society from which the author felt himself excluded. The story is of an episode in the youth of the narrator, a grey-haired old man whose perspective is that, more or less, of our own part of the century. The foreground of the setting is a baleful Black Country town. The wise, but once so gauche, Leadford tells of his rejection by the unforgiving Nettle, who prefers the wealth, not to say the style, of Verrall, the

Industrialist's son. One part of the background is filled by the threat of "the obvious waste and evil that would result from a war between England and Germany". The war begins, and is blamed by the narrator on those "damned little buttoned-up professors". Fortunately for humanity it was not long before there came about what is known throughout the novel as The Change, and this in the trail of the comet.

The comet itself is wonderfully unobtrusive and, after Leadford's mother, quite the most sympathetic character in the novel. When Wells comes to describe it, with its bright, ghostly, phosphorescent glow that changed the starless sky to an extraordinary deep blue, he really lets rip. A paragraph later, and we have been dropped into the cobbled streets of Monkshampton; and then in the next we have a news-boy announcing the loss with all hands of a British battleship in the North Sea. The second half of the novel tends to be almost a Wellsian self-parody. The story-teller, with the advantage of living now under a world state, is able to expatiate on the evils of those periods of spasmodic violence that occasionally disturbed the "odd slackness" of the "old epoch", before they were all philosophically ironed out. The English class system has disappeared, and with it its grimy industry and indeed all that is not truly Fabian.

Intent on murder, the insanely jealous young Leadford sets out to track down Nettle and her lover, but they are all saved at the last moment by the pacific effects of the gases injected into the atmosphere by the comet. The timely catalytic change in all human behaviour brings to an end the war with Germany, the price of eggs falls and the rest is history – or would have been, had Halley's comet been on the same course as Wells. His most perceptive writing is not predictive, and certainly not scientific. Although too often he shows a maudlin sentimentality, few have conveyed quite so well what it felt like to be a talented youth on the wrong side of a certain class barrier.

Pipe-dreams of peace are one thing, but the idea that comets might affect the Earth by filling the atmosphere with dust is no laughing matter. Two decades ago, Harold Urey proposed that an asteroid or comet was responsible for the massive extinction of many living species marking the end of the Cretaceous period, in which dinosaurs had been a domi-

nant form of life. In 1980, Luis Alvarez, with his son and others of the University of California, put forward the same idea, blaming dust from the catastrophe for a serious interruption of sunlight, and a rapid drop of temperature that they supposed led to the massive extinction of species. Very recently, Edward Anders and colleagues at the University of Chicago have announced the discovery of evidence of a global firestorm that swept the world (the evidence comes from Denmark, Spain and New Zealand) at the very time of the supposed impact, 65 million years ago. The Bering Sea is the assumed place of impact, and its force is estimated at a hundred million megatons. The general idea is that species of smaller creatures could have slipped into caves and hibernated,

Catching the drift

Anthony Hallam

ROBERT MUIR WOOD
The Dark Side of the Earth
246pp. Allen and Unwin. £11.95.
004 5500339

In recent years there has been a spate of books dealing with different aspects of the "revolution" in the earth sciences which has led to the general acceptance of plate tectonics; so that one wonders what yet another general account has to offer that is at all new. The opening part of Robert Muir Wood's book is not encouraging. His account of the pre-twentieth-century background to the continental drift controversy and its sequel is sketchy and misleading in places, as well as somewhat careless in its facts. Thus it was Thomas, not Robert, Burnett who wrote *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*. More important, modern historians of geology do not regard Hutton as the true founder of the subject, while in the nineteenth-century dispute about the age of the earth, Kelvin had some important allies among contemporary geologists, at least in the early days.

Wheo, however, the author turns to the twentieth century the standard improves considerably. It is clear that he has read widely and gone thoroughly into the primary literature. Much interesting new information is presented, especially about the strikingly different schools of thought among both geologists and geophysicists in central Europe and North America, between which communication and mutual understanding were often very poor. As regards our own country it is intriguing to learn that the great physicist Lawrence Bragg, in the early 1920s when Wegener's book first appeared in English, expressed himself sympathetic to the novel idea of continental drift. Thirty years later, at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, he was warmly encouraging to Watson and Crick in their revolutionary research in molecular biology. It is not many established professors who have such a creditable record in supporting new developments.

The spectacular post-war research in geophysics and oceanography, leading to the establishment of the new "mobilitic" paradigm involving plate tectonics, is given a comprehensive and well-balanced treatment, with vignettes of the leading personalities involved, though inevitably the author goes over ground dealt with in fuller scholarly detail by Glen in his book, *The Road to Taramillo*. The whole account of the controversy involving Wegener's theory is liberally interspersed with judicious comment and illuminating insights. Thus the telling point is made that, while Wegener's publications indicate for the most part an admirable rationality, his high standards tended to slip when he was writing about his beloved Greenland. Muir Wood's own writing style is lively and laced with racy phrases and pithy comments, though occasionally it descends to an irritatingly jaunty and slick kind of journalism.

If he had been content with a narrative account one would have little ground to complain, but he attempts to round off the book by proposing a general thesis. The widely used phrase "revolution in the earth sciences" is to be replaced, according to Muir Wood, because the true revolution was the replacement of more traditional geology by the earth sciences, spearheaded by the relatively new

disciplines of geophysics and geochemistry. Geology as practised for well over a century, seen as an out-of-date, fuddy-duddy subject characterized by a discredited inductive approach to the gathering of relatively minor facts, restricted in scope to small areas of the earth's surface. There is little analytical rigour and the research equipment is simple or even primitive. Not surprisingly, its most typical practitioners tend to be conservative and distrustful of new ideas. This caricature of traditional geology is contrasted with the modern, scientifically successful approach involving the testing of hypotheses about the earth as a whole, using quantitative methods and sophisticated equipment, and backed up by the tough grounding in the underlying physics and chemistry.

This thesis may contain more than a grain of truth but Muir Wood nevertheless betrays fundamental misunderstanding of what is actually taken place. There was always a significant and influential minority of geologists who thought in global terms or who were sympathetic to the idea of continental mobility once it had been propounded, while some of the most vehement opposition to continental drift came from an older generation of geophysicists, most notably Harold Jeffreys. In fact it could be argued that the seismic interest characteristic of the best geologists would make them more susceptible to new ideas than certain tunnel-visioned mathematical theorists. Muir Wood includes stratigraphy and palaeontology within his traditional geology, evidently failing to realize that good stratigraphic correlation by means of fossils is an essential tool in studying the history of the earth as a whole. The sophistication of the research equipment is irrelevant. Modern stratigraphic techniques involve the use of geophysical and geochemical as well as palaeontological methods but the underlying scientific principles of correlation remain the same.

Without the study of fossils the great advances of the justifiably celebrated deep-sea drilling project would not have taken place. Similarly, our ideas on geotectonics have been significantly transformed in the past few years by the recognition of so-called "displaced" or "suspect" terranes – pieces of land that have travelled extensively in the Pacific before colliding with the Asian or American continental margins. The discovery of displaced terranes came about by research in both palaeontology and rock magnetism. This provides a good example of the point that in the new Earth Sciences traditional and modern research techniques are used in conjunction in the exploration of earth history. To set these techniques or their practitioners, into some kind of opposition is both misleading and unhelpful. It is in many ways a pity that we did not follow the advice of the great Arthur Holmes and pursue geophysics and geochemistry together. Geology, understood in its broad sense as the science of the earth. Unfortunately Muir Wood failed to appreciate the strength of the tradition, now breeds of scientist to establish their place in the sun.

Geological Factors and the Evolution of Plants edited by Bruce H. Tiffney (Cambridge University Press £25.00 300 03304 4) is the collection of papers first read at the North American Paleontological Conference in 1982. Contained among them are Richard Bearbower's "Early Development of Continental Ecosystems" and Michael J. Cope and William G. Chaloner's "Wildfire: An

In the spider's web of magic

Anthony Grafton

D.P. WALKER
Magic, Spirit and Language in the Renaissance
Edited by Penelope Gouk
390pp. Variorum Reprints. £30.
0860781607

Some time in June 1750, more or less, the world stopped trusting magicians and demonologists. For witches suffering persecution and patients seeking remedies this change unfortunately was a disaster. When intellectuals lost belief in magic, they also lost interest in magicians – and thereby lost one of the keys without which the mental world of their forefathers could not be opened up.

The rediscovery of magicians as vital actors in the West's history, quintessential men of the times before our own, has been one of the great achievements of twentieth-century scholarship. It began around the turn of the century, when a number of distinguished scholars turned their energies to assembling and explicating the sources for the history of occult beliefs. They produced powerful collective enterprises like the *Catalogus codicum astrologorum Graecorum* and spectacular individual successes like A. E. Housman's *Manilius*. And they thus provided the implements and colours with which our mental maps of European cultural history could be redrawn. Boll, Warburg and Saxl restored occult forces, magical recipes and astrological computations to their proper, prominent places in pre-modern Europe. They showed that planetary gods and zodiacal demons had fascinated scientists as original as Kepler, philosophers as uninhibited as Cardano, and princes as vigorous as Borso d'Este. And they traced, in essays that retain the fascination of detective stories, the long and crooked paths by which the star spirits of the ancient Near East survived the Middle Ages to find a new life in the night skies of Renaissance Ferrara, Nuremberg and Prague.

No country has done more to further this recovery than England. It gave a home to Warburg's library and Institute. And its own scholars added much to the enterprise of reassessment. B. R. Dodds and others restored the irrational to the classical world as well as to the classical tradition; Peter Brown, Keith Thomas and others moved from the reconstruction of occult beliefs to the study of the social systems that empowered them. No one contributed more to that new and important than D. P. Walker. This collection of his essays, carefully edited by his pupil Penelope Gouk, was meant as a festschrift for him, but his unexpected death early this year has transformed it into a memorial. The collection serves its intended purpose very well. It makes available many classic articles that were previously scattered and inaccessible. More important, it enables us to follow the growth of one of the greatest humanistic scholars of our time.

Walker began in the late 1930s, as a student of French Renaissance literature and musical theory. The earliest essays in this volume, based on his Oxford DPhil dissertation, show with precision and wit how sixteenth and seventeenth-century musicians and philosophers pulled from fragmentary ancient sources elaborate (and sometimes contradictory) accounts of that lost Greek music which had moved slaves and men with equal efficiency. Walker took particular pleasure in showing how the desire to find ancient precedent for some feature of modern music, like polyphony, led his protagonists to misread clear passages and invent helpful evidence. He went on to prove, in many later articles and other works, that the humanists' fanciful reconstructions of ancient music had both influenced the work of some composers and helped to shape poets' ideas about the nature and powers of their art.

Music, however, was only the starting-point for Walker's career, as this collection richly demonstrates. The tools that he consistently applied to the sources proved to have a logic of their own – one that forced him to attack an ever-increasing variety of texts and topics. Even in the 1930s, Walker held that no Renaissance term – not excluding those so

apparently clear as "harmony" or "exorcism" – could be interpreted without careful scrutiny of the contexts in which it appeared and the larger technical vocabulary to which it belonged. No Renaissance idea was too foolish to deserve intensive analysis – analysis designed to recover the unstated assumptions in the light of which apparent folly could have seemed good sense. And no classical or patristic text was so obscure or baffling that it could have played no role in forming early modern thinkers' motives and methods.

By applying these deceptively simple principles to Renaissance texts on music, Walker found that he was opening many doors where he had meant to close just one. His interest in Renaissance accounts of that subtle "spiritus" by which music made its impact on the soul led him to reconstruct the variety of "spirits" which had played a part in early modern natural philosophy, to follow the intricate ways in which these were confused, conflated, and occasionally clarified in philosophical debate, and to prove that bells in "spirit" and "astral bodies" persisted in the central work of supposedly modern scientists like Jean Fernel. His interest in Renaissance descriptions of the power of words and music led him to incantations – and so to the recovery of the long-forgotten rituals by which Renaissance magicians had sought to make life-giving amulets, to draw down the power of the sun, and to ward off the effects of eclipses.

His interest in the problems that might afflict Christian intellectuals who dabbled in these practices led him furthest of all. He mastered Renaissance theology as well as Renaissance magic. He proved a brilliant student of the revival of obscure heresies, the elaboration of a modern apologetics, and – above all – the intricacies of an exegesis that had to support belief in a pagan revelation which rivalled the Jewish and a pagan magic which challenged the Christian. Some of Walker's most provocative essays – like those on ideas of time and eternity and on esoteric symbolism, both included here – depart from magic and music alike to venture bold hypotheses about the structure of Christian thought through the ages.

Certainly no one has ever thought more deeply than he did about the reasons why Renaissance thinkers found allegory and parable incomparably powerful forms of expression – and assumed that the pagan poets and the Bible could both be best interpreted as speaking through a veil of darkness. And no scholar has surpassed his gift for performing historical alchemy – transmuting apparent dross into the gold of evidence. Walker moved with ease in the most hideously crabbed and forbidding intellectual territories. From the vast, ill-probed folios of controversial theologians, Aristotelian commentators and deviant astrologers he derived moody of the curious details – and many of the sharp insights – that give his work such distinction.

His work took many forms, ranging from the brief, suggestive articles collected here to his masterly extended works on *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* (1958) and *The Ancient Theology* (1972). His teaching at University College London and the Warburg Institute led many younger scholars to pursue research on the lines he had laid down, to deepen his sometimes tentative analyses of texts and to apply his methods to new bodies of material. And though he was more austere and diffident than his close friend Frances Yates, he too enjoyed travelling and lecturing on the Continent and in North America. Above all, he used the *New York Review of Books*, for which he wrote many essays, as a means to call the attention of a large public to some of the work that he inspired, or that extended what he had done. Some of these essays appear in the present collection. They show Walker to advantage, as not merely a great scholar but one who never lost a generous and acute appreciation for the work of others.

Considered as a whole, his work has a precise and highly individual character. What strike the reader most forcibly in writings from all periods of his career are the many serene passages in which he sets out, absolutely dispassionately and absolutely patient, the details and the implications of magical and demonic practices.

From Ficino's numerous expositions of demonology the following general outline can be gathered. De-

mons are primarily planetary, though there are also supercelestial and elemental ones. They have souls and ethereal or aerial bodies, according to their status; these bodies are of a like nature to the human spirit. Planetary demons, then, are like men without earthly bodies who live in the heavenly spheres; they perform the function of transmitting celestial influences; they can, being both soul and spirit, act both on man's spirit and his soul.

The power of words in magical operations works, according to Bodin, demonically: the demons who produce the effects respond to one particular formula of words for one particular effect. For example, as every peasant knows, a certain verse of a certain Psalm will, through demonic agency, stop butter being made.

The distinction between a witch and a demoniac is clear and usually well maintained. The devil is not inside a witch's body, as he is in a demoniac's; in consequence a witch does not suffer from convulsions and a demoniac does.

The contrast between level tone and lurid content is typical of Walker's work, and distinctive in the field as a whole. Many of Walker's English contemporaries found it hard to recite such doctrines without making their own distaste for them clear. They approached believers in demons from the standpoint of analysts hoping to dispel delusions. They saw the occult as a destructive temptation to which Western man had long been subject, a regression from reason, a faulty degeneration of religion. Walker's successors, by contrast, rarely mention the details of such beliefs at all. They approach believers in demons as anthropologists, looking less for ideas than for tensions and solidarities in a larger society. Sometimes they have been known to dismiss the details of such beliefs as mere symptoms unworthy of close attention.

Walker, as the passages quoted suggest, was neither an analyst nor an anthropologist, but a taxonomist. He treated past beliefs as things of colour, delicacy and variety, which had to be captured, preserved and systematically displayed if the world that had spawned them was to be known. He rarely spent time deploring the irrationality or inhumanity of those he

studied; he took relatively little interest in the social situations in which magic and demons had flourished (though he was by no means oblivious to the findings of recent social historians). Rather, he dedicated himself to understanding theorists of astrology and casters-out of demons as they themselves (and their contemporaries) did: He read, grasped, classified – and proved, again and again, that the apparently modern creations of Bacon, Newton and Leibniz had contained large residues of traditional and magical thought.

Walker, in sum, took as his task the delineation of that sticky, delicate and inescapable spider's web of magical ideas and beliefs that held pre-modern intellectuals in its grasp and clung, in part, to some of the founders of the modern world. In doing so, he followed the precedents set by those early twentieth-century scholars who first rediscovered the historical interest of magic. Boll and Saxl also studied astrology neither to diagnose the problems of those who believed in it nor to explain their place in the social and political order, but simply because they saw the belief in magic, in sympathies, occult causes and the guiding power of the stars as the warp in the fabric of Western culture: one that was not in conflict with, but intimately connected to, the web of reason and science.

Their enterprise – and Walker's – has its limitations. But it has enormous virtues as well. Walker taught us to see the natural and social worlds as pre-modern Europeans did. If he did not illuminate their motives with the flickering torch of the social sciences, he captured and explicated their ideas with total respect for their sources, their integrity and their historical distance from us. He did as much as anyone ever has to show that early modern men inhabited a cultural as well as a physical *village immobile*. And for carrying out that demanding exercise in erudition, tact and willingness to hear the dead speak in their own voices, he deserves our careful study and attention.

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Princeton University Press, 477 Williamstown Road, Chichester GU1 4JT

Working culture

Stuart Woolf

VITTORIO FOA
La Gerusalemme rimandata: Domande di oggi
agli inglesi del primo novecento
334pp. Tunin: Roanberg and Sellari. L30,000.

The peculiarities of English society, and their historical origins, have long attracted the attention of foreign intellectuals. In particular such scholars from the Continent – or "Europe" as the English persist in calling it – as Elie Halévy, Karl Polanyi or Nikolaus Pevsner have made seminal contributions, perhaps because geographical closeness heightened their sense of the difference of their own intellectual formation and hence their ability to view English society through a different lens. Vittorio Foa's study of the first two decades of twentieth-century Britain inevitably arouses such reflections because of its sharpness of observation, originality and idiosyncrasy.

An active anti-fascist, imprisoned by the régime in 1935, Foa spent his entire career after the war as a trade unionist, one of the leaders of the most powerful of the three Italian confederations, the communist-socialist CGIL. Upkila almost any British (or indeed other Italian) trade unionist, he has retained the wide-ranging curiosity and passion for research of a committed intellectual and since his retirement at the age of sixty in 1970 has dedicated much of his energies to an exploration of the history of the British labour movement. Unduly modest, Foa disclaims to have written a history book; but his "questions of today to Englishmen of the early twentieth century" in fact exemplify what all historians practise: an interpretation of the past derived from the preoccupations and assumptions of the present. What is more open to question is whether the intensity of Foa's experiences and preoccupations as a trade unionist and socialist may not have weighted his analysis disproportionately.

For Foa (as for most foreign and some indigenous socialists), "English society seems animated more than any other by class antagonism and less than any other by socialism, at least in its continental meaning as a profound transformation of the social system". The explanation of this contribution he finds, on the one hand, in the particular pattern of evolution of the British working class and its institutional forms of representation during the nineteenth century; and, on the other hand, in the capacity of the ruling class to confront and absorb recurrent pressures for radical change spontaneously generated from below within the working-class movement. The result was the definitive defeat in the years 1915-21 of the most serious challenge to capitalism: the syndicalist shop stewards' movement. At the centre of Foa's interpretation is a concept of working-class culture which builds on the well-established History Workshop tradition of E. P. Thompson, Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones, which he enriches in an original manner from his personal trade union experiences and reflections.

Two aspects of Foa's understanding of working-class culture merit attention. First, he stresses the non-uniformity of the labour movement as a class, which is internally differentiated through the process of capitalist development, but also historically and hence geographically anchored; with the consequence that it expressed itself in a multiplicity of forms and levels. Foa attacks the simplified Marxist view which ascribes a growing uniformity to the labour movement from the inevitable process of class struggle, in which a mass labour is substituted by a class-conscious proletariat. His own approach is more sophisticated: he argues that the composite and complex sources of working-class culture, in home and neighbourhood as much as in the work-place, can explain in the sometimes negative practical consequences of union leaders' decisions, which are based exclusively on a view of the worker in the factory. Foa's discussion of that hoary question of British labour historiography – working-class patriotism in 1914 – dismisses ideological analyses of socialist ideas and perceives in favour of an illuminating and refreshing cultural interpretation of a "plurality of consciousness" that permitted the individual worker both to support a general policy (of the

just war) and to defend his rights in a concrete situation, e.g. to resist wartime productivity measures.

If working-class culture in general needs to be seen as a complex, fragmented and contradictory cluster of attitudes, more impermeable to than receptive of middle-class culture, then Foa argues that the culture of work acts as a unifying agent. Here his analysis benefits from his intimate knowledge of the labour process in an advanced industrial society, and is also coloured by his faith in the labour movement. He illustrates expertly the nature and mechanisms of friction and conflict in the different industrial sectors in early twentieth-century Britain. Control of the labour process he sees not only as the major theme of social conflict in the Edwardian and war years, but ultimately as the almost transcendental key to the history of human labour: as an inherent resistance to the capitalist, externally imposed organization and ideology of labour. But Foa's definition of this control is concerned less with the Marxist reappropriation of the means of production than with technical control of the tempo and pace of production. In this sense, the factory system or Taylorism, like automation today, are merely different moments of a uniform, long-term capitalist assault on the worker's independence and the very fact of this constant pressure being exerted on practices that encapsulate core elements of the worker's culture, explains the inevitability and irrepressibility of conflict. For Foa, daily resistance at the work-place, in defence of an independent "space" and self-management, accumulated slowly and deeply until it expressed itself in the form of collective struggles. And despite repeated defeats, such resistance will continue, adapting and inventing new methods to meet the changed situation: "there is an informal organization of labour which escapes management decisions, as there is an informal organization of life which escapes every government".

In this context Foa analyses the social history of Britain between 1910 and 1921. Some of what he has to say will not be new to English

readers, but the coherence of his interpretative scheme will provoke positive reflections, not least because it bears so characteristically Continental an imprint. The outbreak of social tensions after 1910 is used as a case-history of the symbiotic relationship that forms between mature capitalist development and class conflict as the workers grow aware and intolerant of inequality. If the distribution of wealth and the accumulation of profits aroused resentment in Edwardian England, mass primary education in turn increased the conflict because of the inability of capitalist society to offer outlets appropriate to the level and expectations of the newly instructed. The Liberal reforms, understood as a response equally to falling productivity and to the imperialist concern for a healthy race, are also interpreted as both the consequence of working-class pressure and as an attempt at social control. But the reforms, by their very enactment, increased the workers' consciousness of their own rights and hence accentuated conflict. The industrial unrest of 1910-14 was the result of pressure from below: the exercise through strikes of the class consciousness of the unskilled before that of the skilled, which union and party leaders proved unable to direct. The primary actors are the shop stewards, whose identification with and organization of labour resistance represent, for Foa, the one affirmation by an autonomous labour movement of a genuinely revolutionary attempt at social change through workers' control. He is at his best in analysing the elements of revolutionary syndicalist ideology present in the shop stewards' committee and he insists on their role as the link between industrial action and the political struggle, and discusses the reasons for the failure of the movement and its aftermath between 1917 and 1921.

The major cause of defeat he identifies as the remarkable ability of the government, forced by war first to intervene in and then to modernize industry, to measure up to the workers' challenge, through an able mix of tergiversation, repression and concessions, which gained

the consensus of the labour movement even before the deliberate smashing of resistance in 1920-21. The modern industrial state thus emerges, longer-sighted as well as stronger than the industrial bourgeoisie, with its battery of repressive powers but, more important, its capacity to gain consent, not least through its incorporation of labour leaders as instruments of social stability. There is a certain *déjà vu* air in Foa's discussion of this new industrial state: it lacks the sophistication and penetration of his analyses of the varied mechanisms and instruments of industrial action. One misses here the sympathetic understanding with which he treats not only the shop stewards' movement, but even the trade unions, whose ineffectiveness he ascribes to their complexity: the different strata each had their own vision and logic, which did not always coincide with those of their leaders. Even so, Foa uses the emergence of this new state to explain the success within the Labour Party of the Webbs' state capitalism and welfare state as the only realistic alternative, not just to revolutionary socialism but to G. D. H. Cole's industrial socialism or to Tawney's moral version of it.

Foa's study is confined to Britain and to the first two decades of this century. But, as he admits, he sees far broader implications of his struggle for self-expression and industrial self-government. The specificity of the English case is stressed and indeed emerges in the slightly puzzled acknowledgement that for most British workers industrial control had little significance as an instrument of social change. But it is a Britain interpreted through the experiences of a remarkable Italian trade unionist, particularly those of the 1960s which culminated in the "hot autumn" of 1969. But as the great challenge of 1968-9 has receded, leaving for most a bitter taste of disillusionment, failure or helplessness in the current crisis, Foa's analysis is tinged with an almost fatalistic resignation, in which he confesses that the destiny of political and social radicalism seems to remain the subordinate one of soliciting reforms within the existing system.

Dockside deals

P. J. Waller

GORDON PHILLIPS and NOEL WHITESIDE
Casual Labour: The unemployment question
in the port transport industry 1880-1970
324pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
019 8227719

The history of the dock work-force in the past hundred years furnishes us with a cautionary tale about public concern and sympathy: their ardour, confusion and futility. In the late 1880s and early 90s, and again at intervals before 1914, the plight of the dock worker arrested the public conscience as being the epitome of misery and degradation in the unregulated labour market of an irresponsible capitalism. Dockers were bled and fired by the day or half-day with as little ceremony as draught animals. Naturally the dockers' personal habits were feckless, too: vicious and hedonistic. The saloon bar was his family hearth, an affront to the Victorian idealization of home. Thus, in the debates generated about the poor and their preventable poverty, from *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883) to *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), it was the docker who was judged to have the bitterest cry and the blackest experience, all the more galling to reformers who were confident that in his case salvation was simple. Rational men advocated "rationalization", that is, a decasualization of the work-force in order that industrial stability and personal security might flourish.

The problem was identified as one of under-employment as much as of unemployment, but the simple solution proved surprisingly difficult to implement and, after the Great War, public concern in the question grew less as new and apparently more deserving objects of compassion were urgently presented to it. Students of poverty and the malfunctioning of the labour market left the waterfronts of East London, Liverpool and Hull, and headed along the

high road to Wigan Pier and Jerrow, where the staple industries of textiles, coal and shipbuilding were suddenly in steep decline and long-term unemployment enveloped a work-force once proud, independent and skilled. The port transport industry faced no less grave problems but was out of the limelight, until recurrent labour militancy and indiscipline during the 1940s and 50s, and technological innovations – automated cargo-handling and containerization – demanded its drastic reorganization. Eventually, in the late 1960s, the decasualization of port labour was accomplished but already and without this a revolution in the earning power of the docker had been achieved. Once considered (fallaciously) to be the meanest paid of unskilled labourers, dockers after the Second World War rose to be among the highest paid of all workers; and their status now bore all the hallmarks of privilege. They formed an exclusive, almost hereditary caste like a labouring House of Lords, with riparian rights.

This curious story is now the subject of an excellent monograph by Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside, which for the first time essays and achieves comprehensiveness. Previous treatments were limited by period or by concentrating on institutional history, of the transport unions especially and of the favoured schemes of public administrators, social statisticians, and labour economists. But there were always at least four parties to the situation: employers, trade unions, rank and file, and public bodies (comprising both official and "expert" elements). None of these parties was homogeneous or consistent; moreover, the issue was never just one of dividing where mutual economic interest best lay and then negotiating the necessary compromises and adjustments. Cultural conditioning and the climate of "casualism", with its particular social attitudes and working practices, was the source of the most intractable problems because it was here that the deepest loyalties were forged and the most obstinate habits set.

It is in this area that the present authors

make their most signal contribution by throughout they impress by their eye-headed and lucid exposition of the interplay of forces which conspired to frustrate successive efforts to reorganize methods of employment in the docks. Historians of industrial relations, economists, sociologists and civil servants alike should ponder their conclusions concerning popular resistance to industrial rationalization, the nature of craft and work skills, management priorities and union objectives, and government welfare and manpower strategies.

The deliberation with which Phillips and Whiteside weigh the evidence commands the highest respect, and there are few instances where their work might be improved. It is a pity, perhaps, that they fail to cite Jimmy Sexton's characteristically extravagant but none the less serious assertion of the dockers' claim to be considered a craftsman. Also they do not seem to have read or used the same author's play, *The Riot Act* (1914), which gives rare insight into the emotional conflict and unblinking vanity of a trade union official torn between making reasonable agreements with employers, enlarging the authority of his union, and preserving the loyalty of the men.

One final grouse about an otherwise outstanding book. It would be interesting to learn more about the repeatedly referred-to Richard Williams, architect of the Clearing House and labour registration scheme introduced in Liverpool in 1911-12, the single most important experiment in the industry before 1914 and arguably for the next twenty years too. Phillips and Whiteside properly and fully evaluate that experiment but say little about the man. They heavily lamp him with William Beveridge, Llewellyn Smith and Humbert Wolfe as one of those "eloquent, self-confident, vigorous and impatient, well-informed and socially blinkered" civil servants who "gave momentum" to the cause of casual labour reform and intensified the opposition to it. But Richard Williams, unlike the rest, did not make it to the top in Whitehall and he has no entry in the DNB or even *Who Was Who*.

A particoloured pedigree

Margaret FitzHerbert

BARBARA STRACHEY
The Strachey Line: An English family in
America, India and at home from 1570-1902
192pp. Gallencz. £12.95.
0375 033933

Family history usually contains the main ingredients of a good nineteenth-century novel – love, death, betrayal, ambition crowned, ambition thwarted, honour tested, honour wanting, with the bonus that it is a true story and that the participants in the drama are real people. Barbara Strachey is the queen of family historians. Not only is she blessed in her own family, in all its extraordinary ramifications, with first-class raw material, but she is also a talented writer. Her history of the Pearsall Smith family in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *Remarkable Relations*, was a model of how to write family history. But *The Strachey Line* will come as a disappointment to her many admirers. These relations are no less remarkable than the Pearsall Smiths but the treatment is perfunctory, the characters too numerous, and the time-span too great. Gone is the wealth of intimate detail and gone, too, is the reader's involvement in the story.

Three-and-a-half centuries and three continents are covered in fourteen compressed chapters with eleven family trees. From among the curious and assorted company one wishes that Miss Strachey had chosen one generation or even two and written about them in depth and at length. Many of the characters are worthy of a complete book to themselves. The first William Strachey was shipwrecked in 1609 in the Caribbean, on his way to Virginia. His description of the shipwreck was used by his friend William Shakespeare in *The Tempest*. This William Strachey was also a friend of the poet Donne. Throughout the centuries the Stracheys, even the obscurer ones, had famous friends. They were seldom very nice to these friends and in general were a cold and unattractive clan, though eccentric and interesting.

Much of Miss Strachey's book is taken up with India, where Stracheys served as administrators from the days of Clive (to whom Henry, the first baronet, was connected by marriage) until the beginning of this century. They were honest, even brilliant, bureaucrats and served India well. Less worthy but more entertaining was another Anglo-Indian family, the Kirkpatricks, into which the Stracheys twice married. James Achilles Kirkpatrick (1764-1806) was the 'most colourful'. He married, after a fashion, a beautiful Indian lady, and adopted many Indian customs. A later Strachey, George (1828-1912), who had a Kirkpatrick mother, also adopted Indian customs. Although he only spent five years in the sub-continent, from the age of nineteen to twenty-four, he insisted for the rest of his life spent in England on sticking to Calcutta time, which he considered the only trustworthy time, breakfasting at tea-time and lunching at midnight. "Breakfast, moreover, he preferred to eat standing, and off the mantelpiece, where it was laid for him, and he liked his eggs cold. He finally took almost entirely to the nocturnal life and was rarely seen." It is in such brief vignettes of obscure Stracheys that the book has charm. One longs for more of these and less of the bureaucratic achievements of the more successful members of the tribe.

The shipwrecked William became Secretary of the Colony of Virginia; and the first Sir Henry helped negotiate the peace treaty after the American War of Independence. Other Stracheys travelled in Tibet and Persia and all left interesting accounts of their doings. Barbara Strachey carries the story no further than the Victorian generation, eschewing her Bloomsbury connections, of whom she notes, "many of them have been more than adequately dealt with by others" (not least, it should be added, by herself). Nevertheless, one wishes she had applied the concentration which she earlier lavished on these Bloomsbury Stracheys to a longer book about a smaller number of their forebears.

A mystifying magus

Robert Irwin

ALASTAIR HAMILTON
William Bedwell the Arabist 1563-1632
163pp. Leiden: Brill/Leiden University Press.
Hf46.
90 04 07241 1

William Bedwell is perhaps best known as the author of *Mahomet Unmasked. Or A Discovery of the manifold Forgeries, Falsehoods, and Impieties of the Blasphemous Seducer Mahomet. With a demonstration of the Insufficiency of his Law, contained in the cursed Alcoran. Written long since in Arabicke and now done into English* . . . (as the first half of the title runs); yet it cannot be said that he is well known. He had an uneventful life as rector of St Ethelburga, Bishopsgate, and then as vicar of Tottenham High Cross. He interposed himself in Ramist techniques for the presentation of mathematics and toiled to produce *Mesolabium Arithmeticon*, a treatise on measuring technique for the use of craftsmen. But his very slight claim for fame rests on his career as an unsuccessful orientalist. Unlike his student Pococke, Bedwell never went out to the Near East and he was even reluctant to seek for manuscripts in foreign libraries. This meant that his knowledge of Arabic was based on very few sources. He compiled an Arabic dictionary which he never succeeded in getting published; the manuscript version was consulted by a few and criticized by some. Thomas Erpenius and Isaac Casaubon had reservations about Bedwell's scholarship and, in general, he was more successful in attracting the friendship of other scholars than their admiration.

It is difficult to be certain about Bedwell's reasons for interesting himself in Arabic, and hard to distinguish the real driving motive from the conventional justifications that he produced on various occasions. Certainly he knew little about the Arabs and he hated Islam. He touted the claims of Arabic to be a practical

skill, an almost universal language, knowledge of which would serve seamen and merchant venturers well; but Bedwell was also concerned to put Arabic at the service of the Anglican Church. Arabic was (in the feet unreliable) handmaiden of biblical studies to be used in the elucidation and translation of Old Testament Hebrew. Arabic also opened a window on to the world of oriental Christianity. It was vaguely hoped that the Maronites, Jacobites, Nestorians, Copts and others might have preserved a more primitive and purer form of Christianity which might prove to be in providential accord with the beliefs of the seventeenth-century Church of England.

Bedwell's interests and contacts were with movements, such as Arminianism or Ramism, that are not now thought of as having been in the mainstream of European intellectual history. He stands at the obscure centre of an intellectual maze, and every path that leads away from Bedwell leads to someone or something more interesting than himself – to Postel, the mad Arabist and Christian Cabbalist martyr, to Pococke, Britain's first Arabist of real note, to Bedwell's ecclesiastical patron, the stylish Christian thinker and orator Lancelot Andrewes. Bedwell's work has links with researches into the *Ur-Sprache*, with Gopius Becanus, who argued that Flemish was the language spoken in the Garden of Eden, and with the revived interest in Oriental Christian communities that was stimulated by Hakluyt's publications. In the previous century, John Dee had interested himself in the practical art of navigation and in the cabbala and in an Oriental Wisdom which might shore up an English Christian Commonwealth. Like the Elizabethan magus, Bedwell professed interests that were both practical and exotic, but in Bedwell the resulting synthesis was more drab.

The dry charm of the man's life and works are well brought out by Alastair Hamilton's fascinating researches now made known in this publication of the Sir Thomas Browne Institute.

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Edited by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson

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0 19 821897-0, paperback, Clarendon Press. £12.50

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The letters are also rare because they tell a complete story, which begins as they begin, and ends when they end. The Browning story, which is also the story of the Barretts of Wimpole Street, Hope End and Torquay, has been told many times, in more than one genre. Dr Karlin's narrative medium is critical analysis. A variant of the most romantic, and one of the most historically illustrative, of Victorian

Manning was born in 1808, the son of a wealthy Evangelical Member of Parliament, deeply involved in the philanthropic causes of William Wilberforce. From Harrow Manning went up to Oxford where he was elected President of the Union and took a First. After considering a political career, he received Holy Orders in 1833 and became a curate to - and within the year succeeded - the Rector of Lavington, John Sargent, one of whose daughters he married (she died four years later). By

By inspecting language, Karlin intonorizes myth. He claims to be performing an act of demythologizing, turning legend into history. I'm not sure that this is what he really does. The story of the courtship is scrupulously revised, gossip coolly disentangled from evidence, psychological speculation firmly based on fact, and shaken free from Freudian banalities. But this fastidious sifting leaves the myth intact. Edward Moulton Barrett was not an ogre, but he was a dreadful man. His patriarchal oppression took an idiosyncratic form, since he didn't want to choose his daughters' mates for them, but wanted to keep his daughters

father loved her, true, but parental domination is compounded, not alleviated, by affection. To make your children as sly and timid as the grown-up Barretts were is brutally violent.

When Barrett turned on sufficient displeasure to forbid Elizabeth going to Italy for her health in the autumn of 1845, it is probably true, as Karla suggests, that he wasn't being simply tyrannical, but sadly and fearfully influenced by the drowning of his eldest son, "Bro". It is also true that Elizabeth enjoyed freedom, to write, read and see friends. (One of the fascinating developments in the story is the lovers' physical intimacy, developed in the

heart of Wimpole Street, subtly disconcerts the letters. Karlin's handling of this stage of the safe side of speculation: how can it be that what could have done was to embrace and kiss what is said about kissing, in the letters, and excite less prudent imaginations.) Barrett's response to the Pisa visit was an important turning-point in his daughter's alienation and completed transference to her lover, and was sheer bad luck for him, like his decision to take the family out of London while the Wimpole Street home was redecorated, just at a moment when Robert's patience and nerves were in danger of running out, with the season. It is true, as Karlin insists, that Elizabeth needed to tell herself the story in a certain way in order to get out. All love had to drain other affections, and her love in Robert speedily chilled the warm feelings with Miss Mitford, as well as her filial feeling.

Karlin is very good on the pathological history of her tuberculosis, bereavement, and the complex family pressures which prolonged invalidity. His speculation is acute, and never commonplace. His rebuke of Barrett's lively but stereotyped judgments about Elizabeth's so-called sibling jealousy and Robert's play of passiveness, must be heard. The intelligent and witty commentary is original when it examines the language of lying. I especially admired the discussion of the key theme of power, which shows how the lovers' arguments about dramatic and poetic poetry, duelling, kindness, gratitude, dependence, Karlin perhaps says too little about the weakness of Elizabeth Barrett, but he is careful to distinguish between the quality of the letters and of the more nervous verse. The book comes to an appropriate complex conclusion. It examines the Pausanias in *Sonnets from Pisa*, especially the one beginning "My love is not copy fair my past", where Barrett assimilates and responds to Pausanias, achieves the liberalizing act, imports marriage and her poetry, of casting her mate, of secularizing old icons and of displacing transcendentalism in the final three

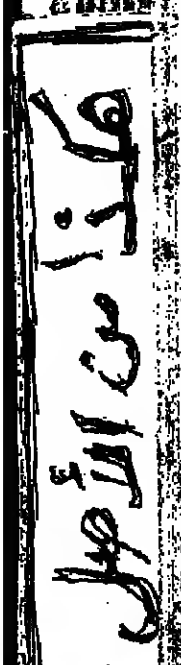
Knowing the throne

New divisions came into being, some harking back to earlier days, others arriving fresh to the time. Whereas poetry had once been "pastoral" or "lyric" or "romantic" and written as a sonnet or a sonnet or a ballad, now it was breaking other boundaries: concrete poetry, sound poetry, visual poetry, and poetry that was categorized because of its subject matter - to love poetry was added sci-fi poetry, underground poetry, "gay" poetry and more and more.

Booth has a certain gift for quotation, to compensate for his almost total inability to write, and he sometimes cites a better average passage from a recent "pop" magazine, adding that it's "better heard than seen." This Thwarte would perhaps agree, though a bit lofty about the dependence on "a violent aggressive and amplified musical backing" so, it's about the only thing on which the agree, apart from a common dislike of Racine. To Booth, Racine is another of "academic" poetry-bosses, like Thwarte, as poetry editors of big publishers ignore poetry-needs of the people. Thwarte censors Racine, perhaps in the French as in the English sense of ignoring. Otherwise they have little in common except some laps

There is also the occasional photograph-poem, that nowadays almost obligatory genre made fashionable perhaps by Larkin but unloved by Larkin's strong ironist resonance in the rendering of drab, prosaic, or even beautiful, things. "The Girl in the Cove" (a lovely, impeccable and colourless "anecdotal" sequence of photograph-poems in *Collected Poems*) and Reynolds's *Skavling's Daughter* must be exempted, however, from this description: they seem the product of a new, original and (in the best sense) unlovely voice. The best poem in *Herbert's* unlovely volume is in another style, a postmodernist monologue set in "the Boudoir uprising of '60-61"), a bit of glumness in the lives of a slave and her master. A large and interesting historical sequence is concerned with the Little Gliding community. *Hartmut's* volume also comes to life in an ultramodern style, finding a resonantly sardonic wit two-thirds of the way through, in "Fat Girl

Archaic bourgeois structures must
Dictate a bourgeois text:
That methodology once grasped,
It's hermeneutics next.



He's a brand-new desk computer
For poems he takes to bits.
"The author's dead", you understand;
In his place our Ernest sits.

I recognize the type. But Curtis's flailing,
flaccid obviousness lacks the necessary poise
for effective satire, and his hectoring becomes
as boring as the character it castigates.

A poet whose satirical energies do not thus
peter out in a complacent patness is Bernard
O'Donoghue (also represented in the Faber
volume). "O'Regan the Amateur Anatomist"
is an angry thrusting onslaught on a sadistic
type, terse in phrase, driving in its rhythms,
properly extravagant in its apprehensions of
nasiness – an unsettling and imaginative balance
of rage and restraint. The poems are
mostly rooted in rural Ireland, without any
trace of folksiness or genial padding.

The "clarity and cool formality" Thwaite
praised in Elizabeth Jennings is also quite
strongly represented in *Poetry Introduction 6*,
which contains quietly accomplished poems by
Susannah Amore and Shirley Bell; and Sarah
Lawson's poems of parental loss, vivid with a
restrained dignity of pain, also just about fall
within the scope of Thwaite's phrase. So
perhaps do some good poems built around
parental relationships or memories in Patricia
McCarthy's *A Second Skin*. (That volume also
has a coy self-portrait called "Curriculum
Vitae", a routine that may be turning into a
fashionable sub-genre. It is reprinted on the
back cover and does the book no good at all.)

The three most interesting new books are
those by Fred D'Agular, Vikram Seth and
Oliver Reynolds. The central figure in D'Agular's
Mama Dot is a fondly mythologized West
Indian mammy, part flesh-and-blood evocation
(the volume is dedicated to D'Agular's
two grandmothers), part Black-Woman-In-
History:

Born on a Sunday
in the kingdom of Ashanti

Sold on Monday
into slavery . . .

Dropped on Friday
where they burned the

Freed on Saturday
in a new century

The parody of Solomon Grundy has laconic
energy, as each day's historical irony is ham-
mered out. But it courts self-indulgence and
the closing triumph rings false. The accesses of
West Indian dialect frequently collapse authen-
tically into cuteness, and D'Agular is half-
hearted or at least intermittent in his use of
them. "Letter from Mama Dot", which ends
"*Neva see come fo me*", contains moments of
political analysis whose well-groomed accents
evoke not so much Mama Dot as Auntie Beeb
at her prosiest:

We are mere and mere
Like another South American dictatorship.
And less and less part of the Caribbean.
Now that we import rice, (rice that used
To grow wild), we queue for meat tins . . .

D'Agular seems to be struggling with a ven-
triloquist bind. Some of the best poems in the
book, even when explicitly concerned with
West Indian themes ("Mama Dot Against the
Overseas Challenge", "Guyanese Days"),
come in very English tones of the 1980s, some
of them learned, I suspect, from Andrew
Motion: hinted narratives with oddly medita-
tive intimations of violence, autobiographical
sequences which are both measured and
fraught.

There's no Mama Dotish folksiness in
Vikram Seth's book:

At home the grandmother has sat down to breakfast
And complains that she is ignored, unloved.

Her blood pressure is high, her spirits low.
She is not allowed to eat gulaschjams.
The deuter has compiled an Index of Feeds
And today, to compound things, is a non-grain fast.
Her dentures hurt. She looks at a stuffed terrine
And considers how to darn her grandson's sweater.

The rich social notation and the ironic flat-
ness recall Eliot's "Aunt Helen" or some of the
sharp vignettes of *Lustra*, but Pound's idiom of
sharp laconic observation is wholly assimilated
into a fastidious probing language that be-
comes confidently Seth's own. It comes over
without dialectal mannerisms or Poundian
archaizing, despite its exotic settings, Indian,
Californian and Chinese, the latter evoking or
"imitating" Pound's Cathay: "From a
Traveller" is a variation on "Exile's Letter" in a
People's Republic setting (by comparison,
Stuart Henson's People's Republic poem "The
Apocryphal Proverbs of the Fool of Taihang"
is mere inert chinoiserie). The title poem and
"The Accountant's House" are small master-
pieces of delicate verbal and emotional disci-
pline, observant of pathos, of ironies of be-
haviour, of the unexpected small exuberances
of life. And there are some beautiful stanzale
poems, with a sturdy Yvor Winters seriousness
(he and Donald Davie seem to have been
Seth's other formative influences) transfigured
by a witty grace: "A Little Night Music" and
the delightful "Research in Jiangsu Province".

Oliver Reynolds is an original. He has mas-
tered an odd, unpredictable flatness, the
source of haunting effects of violence and
bizarrie. A poem called "Victoriana", about
a prolific contributor to the *OED*, a psychologi-
cal casualty of the American Civil War who
lives in Broadmoor, is a small masterpiece of
"secret narrative", a mini mystery-story based
on a real event and focused on the unlikely
person of Dr Murray, compiler of the *OED*. It
is told in an unrhymed four-line stanza that

both suggests and undercuts the
ballad. Deadpan in manner, apparently
sequential in its continuous foreboding of
expected rhyming closure, it has a
unpredictability. One of its specially
strengths, also evident in "Cold War",
a trick of violent pay-offs quietly unfolded,
violence both muffled and made sinister by
studied flatness of idiom and metre, and the
odd bookishness: the Broadmoor inmate
his Ovid and his devotion to the *OED*, the
German prisoner of war who talks Schiller
Goethe, "a Teutonic Ozymandias"
under a T34 which "Pulped his trunk
mulch".

There are other poems in which
phy provides not the setting for a "secret nar-
rative" but the occasion for puns and some
words. "Anna Colutha in Suffolk" is an ad-
rate punning fantasy with a story-line of
"Pastoral" has an Edward Learish way
exotic coiaages which mostly turn out to be
learned mock-nonsense, traceable to
dictionaries, and the book's third and final
tion, largely devoted to Welsh subjects, bi-
nines a strong sense of place with a pen-
chant for lexical foolery with Welsh words.
The plithiest instance of the latter is "Nod"
glossed as the Welsh for "note", though the
title can't help evoking both epic and
and "nodding" ("Homer nod"). In the
gem, satire modulates into pure verbal play.

DJs in Broadcasting House
Having trouble reading out
Birthday cards from Machynlleth,
Should note that the consensus
LJ and ch in Welsh resemble
XJ and / in Xhosa.

A self-regarding coyness sometimes
in, as in the closing line of "Cheese",
the hard edges of a stylish, exuberant
pan meditation. The lapse is rare.

"This Is Your Subject Speaking"

In Memoriam Philip Larkin

By Andrew Motion

On one of those evenings
which came out of nowhere,
and one drink led to another,
and then to another,

at well past midnight
(rain stinging the window;
the gas fire burbling)
you suddenly asked me:

If you could meet one poet
– they could be living or dead –
which one would you choose?
Partly to please you

I told you: Hardy. Hardy!
All he would say is: Motion?
One of the Essex Motions perhaps?
Then came your candid guffaw,

and just for the second or so
before I laughed too, I heard
the gramophone arm we'd forgotten
still alithering round

and round on a record, steadily
brushing the label and filling
the room with a heartbeat:
hump; bump; bump; bump; bump.

East of Hull, past the fishdocks,
the mile after mile of raw terraces,
the bulbous, rubbery-looking prison,

fields begin scrappily – the first few
spotted with derelict cars and sheds,
but settling gradually into a pattern:

a stunted hedge; a dead flat expanse
of plough or tussocky grass; another hedge;
another vast expanse; and nowhere

under the leisurely, washed-out clouds
a single thing to disturb the rhythm
until, like a postcard slowly developing

there is the spire at Patrington –
a fretted tent-pole supporting
the whole enormous weight of the sky.

I told you about it, thinking
your church-going days long gone
and anyway never spent here,

but Yes, you said: *The Queen of Holderness*,
and closed your eyes – seeing yourself,
I suppose, as I see you now:

the new librarian fresh from Ireland,
pedalling off one summery Saturday
(sandwiches packed in your pockets,

grey raincoat tied on the pannier)
flooded the church, standing transfixed
by knots of lustily-carved stone

in the nave's subterranean light,
hearing the tired clock, and feeling
that somehow no one had seen this before

or would do again, but nevertheless
convinced it would always be safe:
a shell as withdrawn as the mind.

where apart from the weary clock,
and wind rushing the leaded glass,
there was only the sound of your footsteps

clicking the wet green flagstones,
stopping, then clicking onwards again
as you finished your slow, irregular circle.

There was that lunchtime
you strode from the library
half grinning, half scowling
on to the Great White Way.

Would you believe it –
(your head craned down;
your office windows behind
fretting with long net curtains) –

I'm reading the new Barbara Pym,
and she says what a comfort
poetry is, when you're grieving
(but you were laughing):

"a poem by T. S. Eliot;
a passage by Thomas Hardy;
a line by Larkin" . . . a line . . .
And think what I did for her!

One particular night
you were prowling in front of my fireplace
half an eye on your drink, half on supper,

and in the mantelpiece, litter of postcards,
ornaments, bowls of odourless pot-pourri,
discovered a jokey book-mark: "Some say

Life's the thing, but I prefer reading."
Jesus Christ what balls. You spun
round on your heel to the table

almost before your anger took hold,
Later, carefully pushing your glass
through the elaborate debris of napkins

and plates shoved any old how
(so it seemed you were making a move
in chess, or planning a battle):

You see, there's nothing to write
which is better than life itself, no matter
how life might let you down, or pass you by,

and smiled – a sad, incredulous smile
which disallowed everything you or anyone
listening then might have wanted to add.

but then again,
I'm really not surprised to be alone.
"My wife and I have asked a crowd of craps"
and "Keep them all off"

put paid to invitations; I can tell you.
Though there was the time
(you made a fierce deleting bleep)
wrote: "Philip, I've to be in Hull

from February second for a day or so;
I'll get to you at half past six."
What could I do? I had a spare room
but no furniture. So out I went

Innocence and destruction

D. W. Hartnett

JAMES MERRILL
Late Settings
88pp. New York: Atheneum. \$6.95.
0 689 11579 2

In "Mirabel" – the second book of Merrill's
ouija trilogy *The Changing Light at Sandover*
(Atheneum, 1982) – the poet is promised
"ONE POEM BEYOND THIS IN CYCLE
AFTER WHICH / U WILL BE RETURNED
TO YR CHRONICLES OF LOVE & LOSS".
The implied contrast is between *Sandover's*
mythic enterprise and the earlier, more per-
sonal poetry subsequently collected in *From
the First Nine* (Atheneum, 1982). Now comes
Late Settings where the lyric stream does in-
deed seem to have resurfaced.

In fact Merrill is more consistent than either
he or his supernatural voices would have us
believe. The poems in *From the First Nine*
show a continual attempt to fashion myth from
autobiography: Merrill's personal odyssey
from the "Broken Home" of his parents' di-
vorce to the fleeting integrations both of ma-
ture sexuality and the imaginative life has been
plotted with the aid of what M. H. Abrams
suggests is a governing Romantic (and post-
Romantic) obsession: the myth of a secular fall
and redemption. In this light the trilogy seems
less of a departure than a continuation. From
Ephraim's cycles of reincarnation to the
angels' pseudo-Blakean creation legends, its
supernatural material focuses a consistent fall
redemption pattern, a pattern which, in turn,
clarifies the autobiographical theme. The only
difference now is that the myth threatens to
become autonomous.

So *Late Settings* cannot simply return to pri-
vate "love and loss" since privacy was never
without a mythical resonance. But not – as a
post-*Sandover* volume – can it repeat earlier
lyric successes. Though the collection is framed
by a myth of innocence versus apocalypse there
is a new sense of historical actuality which owes
much to the trilogy. At the same time Merrill is
much more confident about his personal con-
text. So, in "Grass", intimations of individual
and universal mortality exist side by side: "We
light up between / Earth and Venus / On the
courthouse lawn, / Kept by this cheerful / Inch

of green / and tan more years – fifteen? – / From
disappearing". The fussy indecision of that
penultimate line allows Merrill to link apoca-
lypse (the fatefully occult year 2000) and his
own death. But it also ensures that universal
destruction (itself an episode in the fall myth)
takes on a new relevance: the end of the world is
no longer biblical but actual.

Poems like "Topics" and "Page from the
Koran" entertain similar forebodings. In the
latter the poet buys an Islamic antique on the
same day that "fire . . . / Had half erased
Beirut". The gulf between mind and action is
webbed by guilty complicity. By assuming a
historical reality the apocalyptic motif has ex-
posed the darker side of creativity. The en-
suing syntactical convolutions register great
strain. Elsewhere this strain can be too much;
"Days of 1941-44" placates and exorcises the
ghost of a childhood enemy killed in action
during the Second World War. Beneath the
reminiscences there lurks a perennial subject:
the fallen and divided poetic self. But the way
the verse veers between camp comedy ("This
time, too, it's your pants up the flagpole!")
and an almost visionary exhilaration suggests
that Merrill wants his myth to be both more
and less than mere illustration. The effect is
deeply ambivalent.

The clutch of wilderness poems has more
poise. In "Developers at Crystal River" and
"A Day on the Connecticut River" Merrill's
Emersonian sense of natural innocence is fil-
tered through human eyes. Here poet and
mahatee come face to face: "She drifts closer,
/ Flippers held out, deprecative, but lonely,
/ Makes salute / Her long-lost cousin with his
/ Flippers, his cantera and ylor. / Time stops as
face to face, / She offers what he'll only / Back
on earth find words for – a useful, chaste,
/ Unshaven kiss." The tentative lineation is
beautifully apposite.

But the main achievement of *Late Settings*
rests on long meditations, "Bronze" and "San-
torini", stopping the "Leak". With familiar
panache "Bronze" winds down two separate
anecdotal streams: a tip to see the restored
Riace statues in Florence and a second-hand
account of wartime heroism. Familiar too is the
way these streams merge in an allegory of the
divided self, striving to reconcile the maternal
and the paternal. What is new is the way myth
takes on an autonomy through its proximity to

the poet. The statues actually speak to him,
and their apocalyptic tone is all the more sinis-
ter for being cast in convivial anapaests.

"Saniorini" revolves round a trip to the
Aegean island whose eruption may have con-
tributed to the Atlantis legend. This event pro-
vides Merrill with the twin poles of Edenic
innocence and apocalyptic destruction which
he needs to frame his personal theme: the
artist's frustrated longing for a cultural and
sexual focus. But once again the life-blood of
the myth bubbles up through the voice of ex-
perience. The poem achieves a sort of oracular
casualness, an intermixture of chatty inco-
herence and occult wisdom that disables any
attempt to separate myth from fact. So three
gourmandizing sisters are and are not the

Natural surprises

Tim Dooley

JOAN DOWNAR
The Empire of Light
68pp. Liskeard: Harry Chambers/Peterloo
Poets. £4.50.
0903291 52 2

Joan Downar's first collection, *The Empire of
Light*, is lucid but artful. It takes its title from a
painting by René Magritte of an evening scene,
street-lit, below a bright, summery, day-time
sky: dislocation of the expected depending on
the juxtaposition of contradictory naturalistic
views rather than any outrageous shock. It is an
image which is particularly appropriate to
Downar's work. Her poetry naturalizes its sur-
prises and throws daylight on the concerns of
evening.

Like several of the poets in Harry Cham-
bers's Peterloo Poets series, Downar is a
mature writer whose poetry ranges over the
experience of a number of decades. "In a
Hayfield, 1945" combines first-hand sensuous
description ("The scent / Is thick and prickly as
stale"), evocation of a particular historical
moment ("the sun, pouring / Its heat on already
euphoric / people, uncurled belief") and sug-
gestive symbolism. The arrival of new machin-
ery to a corner of England that seemed "for a

while / impenetrable" is cheered by
"as if / a conqueror arrived."

Such an unfussy movement between dif-
ferent moods and different levels of meaning
characteristic of Downar's poetry. A
giant metaphor that makes of night birds
late mounds . . . like a lake / monster
is part of the pleasure her poems offer.
Does not dominate them. Like the river
she describes in "Bland Landscape",
"subdues / both mound and man to its
use". Particularly impressive are the
written to a friend dying in New Zealand
the rather Marvellian poems about
which she evokes a "tenuous / Eden"
tively straightforward poems such as
and "Gifts". Flatter feminist insights
plication and irony. Downar's art is not
concerned with drawing attention to itself, yet
why indirection demonstrates most her
ness as a poet.

The latest issue of *Agenda* (Volume
Autumn-Winter, 1985-6) contains a
slum on Geoffrey Hill's *Collected
(which will be reviewed in a future issue
TLS)*. This double issue also has
Pound and Eliot, including an essay
formerly by the latter. Subscriptions con-
tinue, from 5 Cranborne Court,
Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE.

and spent a fortune on a bed,
a bed-side table, chest-of-drawers,
a looking-glass, "that" (you grinned)
"that vase." Anyway, he came and went.

and then a second letter: "My dear Philip;
wonderful to see you looking well. Thank you
for your hospitality, and jazz, and drink,
and talk." But not a word about the furniture.

★

Now look at this.
We were slooped side by side
to a glass display-case in the library.

Two poems in two days: "Forget What Did"
and then "High Windows". No corrections!
Well, not many . . .

Your writing ran
across the dark reflection of your face
in lolloping, excited lines. Don't ask me

why I stopped. I didn't stop. It stopped.
In the old days I'd go home at six
and write all evening on a board

across my knees. But now . . . I go home
and there's nothing there, I'm like a chicken
with no egg to lay. Your breath swam red

in a tiny fog across the glass,
cleared, and showed you staring down
a second longer, reading through the line

then straightening. Not bad. But that's enough
of that (one hand sternly guiding me away)
Come on. This is someone's subject speaking.

★

PS.
You know that new anthology?
The one that Mary Wilson edited -
the favourite poems of the famous?

Have you seen it?
Ca'aghan and Mrs T and I
all chose Gray's Elegy.
Why wasn't I Prime Minister?

★

The last time we met
(If I'm lucky I'll know
which time is the last . . .

Unlucky, I mean)
was in the Nursing Home:
buttery afternoon light;

a hot, boxed-in corridor
tiled with lime-green carpet,
the door to your room ajar

and you in your linen suit
watching the Test on telly.
In the silence after applause

or laconic reports, your voice
was the cold, flat voice
of someone describing someone

they hardly knew. Nobody's said
what's wrong with me -
and I haven't asked. Don't you.

Well I've nothing to live for,
have I? Christ, don't answer.
You'll tell me I have. Like seeing



Becker at Wimbledon, winning.
He looked just like young Auden.
That was good. I'm sure I'll die

when I'm as old as my father.
Which gives me until Christmas.
I simply can't cheer up -

and don't you start.
And don't you go, please, either,
till I've had my exercise.

Like skaters terrified their ice
might crack, we shuffled
gingerly around the patch of lawn

and fed each other lines:
how warm it was; how fast
the daisies grew; how difficult

low branches on an apple tree
made reaching the four corners -
anything which might slow down

the endless, easy journey
to your room, the corridor again,
and then the glass front door.

The trouble is, I've written
scenes like this so many times
there's nothing to surprise me.

But that doesn't help one bit.
It just appals me. Now you go.
I won't come out. I'll watch you.

So you did: both hands lifted
palms out, fingers spread -
more like someone shocked

or fending something off
in passive desperation
than like someone waving -

but still clearly there;
and staring through the door
when I looked from my car.

waved back, pulled out,
then quickly vanished
down an avenue of sycamores

where glassy flocks of sunlight
skittered through the leaves, falling
blindingly along the empty street.

Letters

'Lost Magic Kingdoms'

Sir, - In his review of Eduardo Paolozzi's exhibition *Lost Magic Kingdoms and Six Paper Moons* at the Museum of Mankind (Commentary, January 24) Tom Phillips does not mention the fact that similar decontextualized displays can be seen at every preview of a Solleby's or Christie's tribal-art sale. It is remarkable that the national museum of non-Western artefacts should stage an exhibition so devoid of anthropological understanding or educational intent. Paolozzi transforms artefacts into art-objects by displaying them like a collection of pinned butterflies. Old photographs of anonymous natives are projected to lighten the sear of the exotic. Art critics have praised the exhibition precisely because its psychedelic jumble of "tribal" items requires no knowledge of any social function that these objects had in their societies of manufacture. It is a collection of "tribal" lost property assembled by an aesthete as an exercise in ethno-voyeuristic surrealism. If the message is that non-Western peoples are capable of creating things by using the materials at hand and that items of material culture demonstrate the effects of social change, surely this is common knowledge.

JOSEPH BRANT.

Bedford Court Mansions, London WC1.

We regret that owing to industrial action not all printing errors in this issue have been corrected, and a number of reviews and letters have been held over. We also apologize to readers who have had difficulty in obtaining the paper; distribution arrangements should soon be back to normal.

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

To miss a PEN congress need be, or so one tells oneself, no great thing. As Susan Sontag wrote, exactly twenty years ago, of one such gathering in Yugoslavia:

It was almost too easy to be cynical. The official theme of the congress was that venerable catch-all, "The Writer and Contemporary Society", and, as W. H. Auden (who was invited and didn't come) is reported to have said to Stephen Spender (who did come), surely in the last thirty years everything that can be said on that subject has been said.

And, in the same 1966 essay:

And PEN? What was that? In New York: a joke, a bore, something to be polite to. Monthly postcards announcing cocktails at the Hotel Pierre on which one might be improbably promised the chance to meet at one fell swoop Virginia Kirkus, William Burroughs and Isaac Bashevis Singer? Expensive dinner at the Overseas Press Club with dessert a lecture on how to write articles for travel magazines, or a panel discussion on whether the modern novel is going "too far"? And if the services of the American PEN are rather remote from literature as so art, what would an international PEN Congress do but compound the distance?

As a conference rubric, "The Imagination of the Writer and the Imagination of the State" seems hardly less of an old Dobbin trotted round the paddock than did "The Writer and Contemporary Society" two decades ago. Yet such was the announced theme of Norman Mailer's PEN International jamboree last month. And among the first greyhounds out of the trap was the *cl-devant* biased Ms Sontag. Here was the top signature on a petition repudiating Norman Mailer's invitation to the US Secretary of State, George Shultz. As B. L. Doctorow complained, in his article igniting the controversy, it is Shultz's State Department that employs the risible McCarthy-Walter Act to keep "undesirable" writers out of the United States. And PEN has long campaigned for the repeal of those sections of the Act which allow this. Moreover, Mailer had issued the invitation without consulting the PEN executive board. And furthermore . . . as I write this, the *New York Times* reports that Ms Sontag and Mr Mailer are still not speaking, and that Mr Mailer expects to pay "with years of bad reviews" for his unscripted remarks about the under-representation of women.

Only two months ago (see *American notes*, November 29) I was attempting to ridicule Mailer for describing the United States administration as one of "musical comedy fascism".

There have been two ideas of America which have been quarrelling. The first is, if I may put it very broadly, an idea of America held by Americans, and the other is an idea of America held by everyone else. It is not surprising that the American view of America should be an interior view and the non-American view of America should be an exterior view. But it seemed to me worth asking about, if you like, the alienation of the American writer from the

'Jesus Through the Centuries'

Sir, - Anthony Burgess is quite right (in his review of Jaroslav Pelikan's *Jesus Through the Centuries*, December 20) to find "highly disturbing" the elevation of the message above the institutions required to make it meaningful. But Burgess is wrong to say that "there are probably very few Pelagians around these days". Pelagius stood for a doctrine requiring the diminution of differences among people, differences he believed perpetuated by earthly ecclesiastical institutions. Reducing inequalities between women and men, children and parents, young and old, experts and laymen, even animals and people, is the grand passion of the West today. But there is no Augustine who knows that without social differences there can be no moral differences, nor churches that institutionalize them. No legitimate inequality, no institutions, no authority, no church.

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'Freud for Historians'

Sir, - Your choice of reviewers is at times puzzling. We all know what Ernest Gellner thinks of psychoanalysis, and asking him to review (January 24) Peter Gay's book *Freud for Historians* is tantamount to asking for the book to be dismissed. This Professor Gellner has done, using the main body of his review for reiterating his well-known rejection of psychoanalysis, or rather the orthodox Freud-

ian version of it. For like other opponents of psychoanalysis he takes no notice of the fact that there has been criticism of the original Freudian position among psychoanalysts themselves, and that many of Freud's concepts have been rethought and reformulated.

You illustrate my point admirably in the review which follows Gellner's. I refer to Peter Fuller's assessment of Daniel Weiss's collection of psychoanalytically oriented literary criticism. Fuller, as his books show, is interested in psychoanalytic theory though (like Charles Rycroft whose writings he recently edited) he disagrees with many of its original propositions. His review of Weiss's book, though strongly critical of Weiss's adherence to strictly Freudian principles, is informed and constructive rather than just dismissive.

HANS W. COHN.
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Toy Soldiers

Sir, - John Carswell's review of Janice Opie's *Britain's Toy Soldiers 1893-1932* (December 20), interesting though it was, contained one inaccuracy. As a keen collector of British soldiers from 1914 to 1922, I do not agree that "it is significant that neither world war made much difference to Britain's offerings". With their fathers, uncles and older brothers in khaki, boys had little interest in red-coated soldiers. Aware of this, Britain's first sold infantry and cavalry of the BEF in full-order khaki with flat caps, then British infantry (1916) in full equipment and tin hats (and later with gas masks). These were sold at the same

time as khaki-clad machine-gunners, dispatch riders and lorry drivers. Britains also made naval landing parties and French poilus in blue-grey and steel helmets. They sold army vehicles, field guns, and howitzers; but not German soldiers. For the enemy I used Bulgarian and Russian infantry dressed in dark green for the Balkan wars, although I think that Turks were available. (As for the Second World War, I understand that Britains were unable to use lead for models.)

One further point: is it true to say that "Britain's army belongs to the days of the Jubilee and Durbar which ended with 1914"? The excellent models in lead composition now sold by them to collectors are mostly wearing the uniforms required in 1985 for Trooping the Colour and Changing the Royal Guard.

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Inventing Boswell

Sir, - Some malign influence garbled a reference to Boswell in my review (January 10) of *A Book of One's Own* by Thomas Mallon and *The Innan Diary* so that it read: "It fits Boswell, who is often said to have invented James Boswell as well." This makes, not exactly sense, but plausible-sounding nonsense. I hope I may correct it. What I wrote was: "It fits Boswell, who is often said to have invented the Johnson we read about, but sometimes seems to have invented James Boswell as well."

JULIAN SYMONS.
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★ ★ ★

It is sobering to think that the *Notional Review* has just turned thirty. During that time, it has acted as oia of the great accidental bloodstock stables of the contemporary scene. It gave an early start to Joan Didion, John Leonard, Gary Willis and Renata Adler as critics and essayists. The fact that they have all defected, in different ways, from the magazine's catholic and conservative style is a slocere inverse tribute to its editor, William Buckley. So is the very survival of an uncommercial weekly which must still pretend, in a time of Toryism resurgent, to be iconoclastic and against the stream. It wasn't always so. To look back is to re-live the most anguished and intense debates about education and about the relationship between *clerics* and *trahison*.

Hugh Kenner was almost driven from his post as the magazine's Poetry Editor because he published the "fellow-traveller" William Carlos Williams. A saving spaciousness in Buckley's part averted this and other (though not all) atrocities. He once spilled a lot of ink to prove that Evelyn Waugh had not called him a bore. A touching work of supererogation.

★ ★ ★

There has been unusual interest in the latest loan exhibit to go on view in the National Gallery in Washington. The exhibit consists of a single picture - Titian's seven-foot-high representation of the *Psyche of Marsyas* (shown in Britain in *The Genius of Venice* exhibition at the Royal Academy, TLS December 9, 1983). The stark gruesomeness of the painting, which Titian completed shortly before his death in 1576, has provoked numerous allegorical commentaries. The best of these, and the most persuasive, comes from Sydney J. Freedberg, Chief Curator of the National Gallery. Freedberg hypothesizes that the picture originates in one of Venice's greatest humiliations: the capture of Famagusta by the Turks in 1571. The fall of the city gave Cyprus to Lala Mustafa, who promptly broke the terms of the surrender by putting the Venetian commander, Marcantonio Bragadino, to death. The mode of execu-

tion, all sources agree, was flaying. The news arrived in Venice and created widespread misery and shock: replaced by extraordinary jubilation a few months later with the tidings of Lepanto. As Freedberg writes,

If our assumptions are correct the idea of the *Marsyas* was born out of the tragedy of Famagusta and the torture of Bragadino, but it was developed in the aftermath of exaltation over Lepanto . . . since it was undeniably in Titian's aesthetic that it could be depicted as a historical occurrence, it had to be represented by analogue, and the Flaying of Marsyas was ready to hand.

This theory has the advantage of fitting the action as well as the atmosphere of the painting, in which Apollo and Marsyas appear almost to be in balance despite their contrasted roles as executioner and victim.

★ ★ ★

Americans approve of *vers d'occasion*, as was demonstrated by the response to Robert Frost's appearance at the John F. Kennedy Inaugural. But the idea of a poet laureate has always been regarded with suspicion here, because of its monarchic associations. This month, however, the Library of Congress is likely to nominate a laureate, who will serve under that title and also under the more democratic heading of "Poetry Consultant to The Congress". (The laureateship will carry an emolument of \$10,000, and the consultancy a salary of \$35,000.)

Keen as I am on republican institutions, I still think that this change is a boon. For a start, it will relieve the White House of its role as poetry consultant; a role it has discharged with conspicuous lack of brio. The difficulty was well illustrated in the last week of January, when the space catastrophe seemed to call for something more than mere prose: Ronald Reagan ended his speech to the nation with the idea that the seven dead astronauts had "silppled the fiery bonds of earth / to touch the face of God". After several false starts, I was able to establish from the White House that these inapposite lines come from "High Flight", composed by John Gillespie Magee, an American pilot who was killed in action in December 1941, while serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force. I thought that I had heard the poem somewhere before and I was right. For the last six years (the term of Reagan's presidency) it has been played as a video at the close down of Washington's Channel 9 television station. A laureate would be preferable.

July 6, 1984), Jeffrey Masson relies on this correspondence to make his case that Freud abandoned the seduction theory of the aetiology of neurosis, not in response to accumulated clinical evidence, but "because of a personal failure of courage." The main weight of Masson's argument is carried by his interpretation of the case of Emma Eckstein, a patient of Freud's whom he referred to Fliess for nasal surgery in accordance with Fliess's theory of the organic relation between the nose and the genitalia. Following Fliess's surgery on her turbinate bone and one of her sinuses Emma Eckstein did not recover. She had severe swelling and haemorrhages which were only explained when another surgeon pulled out "a good half a meter of gauze" which Fliess had left in the cavity. The patient almost bled to death. Freud, who was present, felt sick, fled to the next room and drank some cognac. He waited for a day before writing to Fliess. When he does write, it is a letter affirming Fliess's innocence and his own culpability: "How wrong I was to urge you to operate in a foreign city where you could not follow through on the case." Freud is full of protestations, too strong and too many, of Fliess's innocence: "One of those accidents that happen to the most fortunate and circumspect of surgeons . . . Of course, no one is blaming you, nor would I know if they should . . . and rest assured that it was not necessary for me to reaffirm my trust in you once again." (March 8, 1895). Freud blames the new surgeon - anyone, so long as it is not his mentor, who can do no wrong. He writes: "It is now about time

that you forgave yourself the minimal oversight . . ." (March 13, 1895). Yet there is a series of scarcely concealed messages of rebuke to Fliess in this correspondence. Today, thanks to Freud himself, we know that repeated denials of blame and reaffirmations of trust, such as he sent to Fliess, are defences against being reproached. Freud points out that Fliess's own doctor used wicks instead of gauze, as if to say: "Why didn't you do the same?" Yet he makes excuses for Fliess and defends himself against the knowledge of Fliess's culpability in Emma Eckstein's post-surgical complications. He tries to view clinical developments in the framework of Fliess's theory of masculine and feminine periodicity. More than a year after the case, Freud writes:

First of all Eckstein. I shall be able to prove to you that you were right, that her episodes of bleeding were hysterical, were occasioned by longing, and probably occurred at the sexually relevant times (the woman, out of resistance, has not yet supplied me with the dates). (April 26, 1896). As for Eckstein - I am taking notes on her history so that I can send it to you - so far I know only that she bled out of longing. (May 4, 1896). There is no doubt that her haemorrhages were due to wishes; she has several similar incidents, among them actual simulations, in her childhood. (June 4, 1896).

Freud needed Fliess, was dependent on him, and therefore protected his goodness, innocence and competence until he was able to detach himself from the relationship after his own self-analysis. But his intellectual submissiveness does not by any means prove Masson's

claim that Freud reasoned that because he believed Emma Eckstein's bleeding had nothing to do with Fliess's poor surgical technique, any patient's accounts of seduction could also be fantasies. Freud's recognition and elevation of the role of fantasy to a principle of psychoanalytic theory and clinical technique is independent of his adoration and protection of Fliess.

Freud struggled from transference and regression up on to a new level of maturity and autonomy. As he fought through his self-analysis, which he was to continue for the rest of his life, he freed himself from his dependence on Fliess. The first step was to bring the feelings of intense need for the other man to consciousness: "No one can replace for me the relationship with the friend which a special - possibly feminine - side demands . . ." (May 7, 1900). In the summer of 1900 they had their final meeting in Achenese. The next summer Freud writes, "I do not share your contempt for friendship between men, probably because I am to a high degree party to it. In my life, as you know, woman has never replaced the comrade, the friend." (August 7, 1901). The relationship ends on a note of vituperation about Fliess's primacy in "discovering" bisexuality and his accusation that Freud colluded in the "burglary" of his ideas. (July 26, 1904).

This new edition has superseded all others, not only that of 1950 but also the fragments published by Jones, James Strachey and Schur. The editing is scrupulous; and the notes usually on the mark, enriching the context of the letters.

Distorting mirrors

J. K. Wing

OLIVER SACKS
The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat
233pp. Duckworth, £9.95.
0715620673

Sickness, says Oliver Sacks, is a quintessential human condition. Whether it is or not, disease does present us with a distorting mirror in which we can view our "normality" from a different perspective. The result is particularly alarming when the disease affects a person's identity or, odder still, one part of a person's identity, the other parts remaining apparently intact.

In an earlier book, *Awakenings*, Oliver Sacks showed himself able to describe with sympathy, clarity, honesty and wit the extraordinary post-encephalitic complications that afflicted survivors of the epidemic of sleeping sickness that raged during the 1920s. These were mostly severe and unusual forms of symptoms seen in ordinary Parkinson's disease. On the one hand a zombie-like passivity or lack of will to act that could result in cataplexy or a decades-long "sleep". On the other, irresistible motor urges that might follow some unexpected stimulus such as a fire alarm, setting the individual "suddenly and startlingly alive for a minute". Such flashes were rare. Segregated in institutions, the sufferers were forgotten until it was discovered that the transfer and metabolism of the neurotransmitter dopamine were defective in those parts of the brain affected in Parkinson's disease. *Awakenings* is about the responses, often bizarre, sometimes tragic, always intensely moving, of twenty patients treated with L-DOPA, a drug that partially substitutes for dopamine, which enabled some of them to begin another kind of life.

Dr Sacks wrote the stories of these patients with a driving passion and a literary skill that led W. H. Auden to acclaim the book as a masterpiece and Harold Pinter to write a play, *A Kind of Alaska*, based on the story of one of the patients. Sacks's new book could not reasonably be expected to achieve a similar intensity or unity, because it consists of a set of diverse case histories loosely connected by one of the themes that was powerfully developed in *Awakenings* - loss of or damage to personal identity.

The title-story is about a distinguished musician who developed a visual agnosia. He could not recognize faces, or facial expressions, or complex objects presented visually. He had no

visual imagination or visual memories or visual dreams except for simple images. Hence his mistake when, looking for his hat, he roached for his wife's head instead. He was totally unaware of his disability. (Neurologists have a word for this, too - anosagnosia. Who is more damned, asks Sacks: the man who knows, or the man who does not?) A massive tumour in the visual parts of the brain left this man's musical talent intact. He was able to play and to teach music until the tumour ended his life.

The first part of the book is all about deficits. There are nine brief stories; each concerning a person who somehow has to come to terms with a disability that other people cannot imagine themselves having. One such is the grey-haired sailor who lost his memory through alcoholism and lived in a world that, to him, was perpetually 1945, when he was nineteen. Another is the man who, following a stroke, thought his homoplastic leg belonged to someone else and fell out of bed while trying to get rid of it. Then there is the man who cannot understand the meaning of words but who can follow the pitch, assonance and emotional expression of speech with enjoyment and a degree of comprehension. By contrast, there is the man who has a total agnosia; he understands words but, to him, Oliver speaking Hamlet would sound stale, flat and unprofitable.

In the second section, Sacks presents stories about excesses, such as those suffered and enjoyed by Willy Tlicy Ray. He suffered from Tourette's syndrome, which is characterized by "tics, jerks, mannerisms, grimaces, noises, eases, involuntary irritations and compulsions of all sorts, with an odd elfin humour and a tendency to ante and outlandish kinds of play." How can the ego withstand this bombardment, asks the doctor, can identify survive? Having a strong personality, Ray puts his tics to good use as a drummer in a jazz band on Saturdays, but suppresses them with the drug "Haloperidol" during the week. Lesser characters, or those with more severe forms of the disease, like the woman in the story called "The Possessed", might be overwhelmed and become almost indistinguishable from their disease. The miracle is that, in most cases, the afflicted people not only survive but achieve their own personal identity.

Perhaps the most remarkable stories are told in Part Three, which is called "Transports". An Indian girl of nineteen developed a localized and removable brain tumour. After operation she was well for ten years but then the tumour recurred; malignant, invasive and inoperable.

She started to have *grand mal* fits but as the tumour spread to the temporal lobe these changed to turns of a different kind, she became dreamy and saw visions of people that she had known as a child. The form of the temporal lobe seizure, which tends to be somewhat stereotyped and limited, was developed into an experience of dying like a dream of going home. A completely different experience was related by a medical student who had experimented with a variety of "mind-bending" drugs like cocaine and amphetamine. One night he dreamt he was a dog living in a small, rich world. On waking, he found that he was, in fact, surrounded by a universe where smell was the chief sensation. He could distinguish his friends, the streets of New York, each individual shop, by smell. After three weeks he returned to "normal".

In the final section, Sacks provides an insight into the world of people who are born, or become, simple-minded but who nevertheless have special talents that most of us would envy; the so-called *Idiot savants* and the autistic children grown up who can draw or play music like angels. There are better accounts of these matters elsewhere but Sacks does manage to convey, as few authors do nowadays, a sense of continuity between the neurological and the psychiatric that has tended to be lost since the development of two separate professions.

While the author is involved in his stories his virtues are paramount: excellent prose, a literary imagination, a talent for clinical (though not technical) exposition that is out of the ordinary; above all, a capacity to see through the eyes of people who have entered new worlds and must achieve new identities if they are to survive as truly human beings. His attempt to provide an overall philosophical framework is less satisfactory, because too far removed from the practicalities and limitations of medicine so well expressed by Dr Rieux in Camus's *La Peste*. It might have been better to have considered each case in the light of what it could tell us about normal as well as abnormal neurological and psychological functions. One is also uneasily aware (it was not so obtrusive in *Awakenings*) that Sacks's patients all talk as he does. He cannot quite give them their own accents and idiom.

These are small matters. What really holds the book together is the author's recognition that a large part of medicine has to do with the problem of living with disability; whether it is schizophrenic or Tourette's syndrome or diabetes or an amputated limb or just one's own unique personality.

Faithfully funny peculiar

Stuart Sutherland

GUY LYON PLAYFAIR
If This Be Magic
284pp. Cape, £9.95.
0224023381

The miraculous has always had an appeal. Several popular books on magic appear each year; the latest, *If This Be Magic* by Guy Lyon Playfair, differs little from most of its predecessors. It claims that hypnosis and faith-healing are highly effective in curing illness and promoting recovery and psychokinesis are established phenomena. Faith is apparently an ordinary citizen needs in order to stamp by sending his Christmas card through the ether instead of by post.

It is of interest to examine the case of Guy Lyon Playfair to make his case. A reliance on "on-the-spot" stories of a "cured" of an inherited disease of the hypnosis; stories of séances with knocking; stories of faith-healing; and of telepathic encounters at moments of crisis. For every tale told by Playfair, it is possible to construct an everyday explanation. A suggestion, observer bias, coincidence, downright fraud. Even in medicine, which has been reached in agriculture, psychology - that nothing could be done from single case studies, particularly when the doctor was the arbiter of the success of treatment.

Second, Playfair rarely considers the side of the case. For example, he discusses the well-controlled study on the hypnosis on asthma, but fails to mention that although patients who had hypnosis said they felt better, they did not improve on whatever in their asthma. Hypnosis can certainly make a person hear an illness, but almost all controlled studies suggest that it has no direct effect (except on warts). It is, for example, even in reducing blood pressure, does not cite the relevant research. One-sided in dealing with the world, he cites the telepathy experiments and Puthoff, but not Meria and the rebuttal, and he mentions Uri Geller's exposure by the Great Rhine. Rhine with approval, a man who he was talking about, but he does not cite the Rhine did not know enough to be an assistant who was caught cheating.

Third, he consistently appeals to having a particular penchant for Nobel Prize-winners. "One observed . . . by at least fifty winners . . . including four women . . . Prizes." Unfortunately, professional as dotty as anyone else once outside the exclusive grind through Italy, must have what it would be like to live in one of the hill towns that they glimpse from the windows. A stay of a few days in such a place may transform such mild curiosity into a life interest. To this John and Adeline will come this form of this life survive or by tourists? Spello: *Life today in ancient*

was not somewhere that they had determined to return to. They happened to spend a winter and spring there, and accounts for the surprising omnipresence of olive trees. In every season the dignity and grace of the town are a delight. The inhabitants, the Hartcup found, at times hospitable beyond the ordinary capacity. They tell us much about the traditional dishes, meals, celebrations with their more sociological explanations. Every meeting, every invitation, every quantity of food, so much so that they eat pasta twice a day and even ask, "Do you really, perhaps, entertain only members of your family, for whom they aim at less elaborate and treat them to rivers of

Perhaps the most original feature of the book is Playfair's chicanery at the séance table. Before any spiritualistic ruse or complete faith in their occurrence, a way of producing such faith by one's shake (the table deliriously how far he has used the same phrase, the effects of his book on the

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Blackwell.

A red-blooded Englishman, I naturally, find the book a little tedious and inadequate. It is of interest to examine the case of Guy Lyon Playfair to make his case. A reliance on "on-the-spot" stories of a "cured" of an inherited disease of the hypnosis; stories of séances with knocking; stories of faith-healing; and of telepathic encounters at moments of crisis. For every tale told by Playfair, it is possible to construct an everyday explanation. A suggestion, observer bias, coincidence, downright fraud. Even in medicine, which has been reached in agriculture, psychology - that nothing could be done from single case studies, particularly when the doctor was the arbiter of the success of treatment.

Second, Playfair rarely considers the side of the case. For example, he discusses the well-controlled study on the hypnosis on asthma, but fails to mention that although patients who had hypnosis said they felt better, they did not improve on whatever in their asthma. Hypnosis can certainly make a person hear an illness, but almost all controlled studies suggest that it has no direct effect (except on warts). It is, for example, even in reducing blood pressure, does not cite the relevant research. One-sided in dealing with the world, he cites the telepathy experiments and Puthoff, but not Meria and the rebuttal, and he mentions Uri Geller's exposure by the Great Rhine. Rhine with approval, a man who he was talking about, but he does not cite the Rhine did not know enough to be an assistant who was caught cheating.

Third, he consistently appeals to having a particular penchant for Nobel Prize-winners. "One observed . . . by at least fifty winners . . . including four women . . . Prizes." Unfortunately, professional as dotty as anyone else once outside the exclusive grind through Italy, must have what it would be like to live in one of the hill towns that they glimpse from the windows. A stay of a few days in such a place may transform such mild curiosity into a life interest. To this John and Adeline will come this form of this life survive or by tourists? Spello: *Life today in ancient*

was not somewhere that they had determined to return to. They happened to spend a winter and spring there, and accounts for the surprising omnipresence of olive trees. In every season the dignity and grace of the town are a delight. The inhabitants, the Hartcup found, at times hospitable beyond the ordinary capacity. They tell us much about the traditional dishes, meals, celebrations with their more sociological explanations. Every meeting, every invitation, every quantity of food, so much so that they eat pasta twice a day and even ask, "Do you really, perhaps, entertain only members of your family, for whom they aim at less elaborate and treat them to rivers of

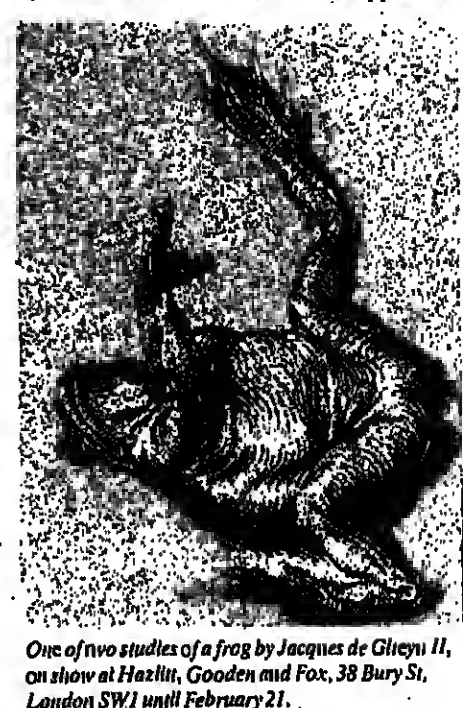
Perhaps the most original feature of the book is Playfair's chicanery at the séance table. Before any spiritualistic ruse or complete faith in their occurrence, a way of producing such faith by one's shake (the table deliriously how far he has used the same phrase, the effects of his book on the

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joke disappears up its own kolkhozny. "Russian friends", we are told, "will often give you invaluable advice . . . But beware of the eager genius." That is not a comment on the Soviet character. For "all over the world there are people who long to get their screwdrivers into any piece of equipment they have never seen before, and yours may never be quite the same again". That comment ought (if it has any value) to be included in *Coping with Life*, not in a guide to coping with a single nation.

Invitably the American volume is even more arch. "Don't be alarmed", Peter Trudgill reassures his readers, "if you find a paper seal around the toilet bowl in your bathroom indicating that the toilet has been SANITIZED FOR YOUR PROTECTION . . . These seals are probably indicative of something important in the American psychology, but it is difficult to know exactly what." I know exactly what - American middle-class obsession with health and hygiene. I suspect that Mr Trudgill supports my hypothesis. But the rhetorical ignorance sounds - or is, at least, supposed to



One of two studies of a frog by Jacques de Gheyn II, on show at Hazlitt, Gooden and Fox, 38 Bury St, London SW1 until February 21.

sound - smart.

It is the warnings which are most revealing. *Coping with America* contains useful hints about avoiding direct conflict with grizzly bears and a helpful reminder that alligators are only dangerous when provoked. But it is what Mr Trudgill has to say about eating habits that establishes the true relationship between snobbery and chauvinism.

You are also supposed to use the same knife for savouries and sweet tings (except of course that Americans don't use knives unless they really have to), and you will even see people taking alternative mouthfuls of egg and toast with you.

What can the reader expect? No tradition of Latin in schools. No cricket.

Perhaps because one of its authors is actually Japanese, *Coping with Japan* treats its subjects with a respect which is consistent with the encouragement of interest. It contains ten fascinating pages of history which convinced me, at

World-wide courtesies

Francis King

ANGUS WILSON
Reflections in a Writer's Eye: Writings on travel
183pp. Secker and Warburg, £9.95.
0436576112

The two areas of "abroad" in which Angus Wilson has travelled both most frequently and most widely are France and the United States. About France his collection *Reflections in a Writer's Eye* contains nothing, and about the United States its two shortest and least satisfactory pieces, each little more than a bread-and-butter letter to the country whose universities have, as he puts it, "enriched my middle and later years so enormously". Even in the States, however, he shows himself to be the sort of fortunate writer to whom remarkable things constantly happen. Thus in Minneapolis an old woman stops him in a park to say: "You look like Einstein. May I stroke your hair?" Going into a bar, he asks, "Do you have a Pernod here?", to receive the answer, "A piano? No. Do you want a drink?"

The finest essay, because it is the one that goes deepest, is the 1975 "New and Old on the Grand Trunk Road", based on notes made when Sir Angus was following in Kipling's footsteps across North India and Pakistan, collecting material for his Kipling biography. Though the book does not contain all that many arresting phrases, this essay is full of them; for example, "the ambiguous Indian sense of spiritual duplicity". He sees the subcontinent as a perfect place - apart from its natural, human and aesthetic beauties - for a

Site by Side

Derek Prouse

DANIEL FARSON
A Traveller in Turkey
221pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £9.95.
0710202814

Like many other travellers in recent years, Daniel Farson has become captivated by Turkey. The landscape is one of extremes: the dazzling Mediterranean coastline from Bodrum to Mersin, the harsh almost biblical purity of the eastern province of Van, the wildness of Cappadocia, created by wind, lava and tufa. In the course of several journeys Farson has covered a lot of territory and won the friendship of many Turks, even though he does not speak the language. *A Traveller in Turkey* is intimate and gossipy - practical, too, for it lists recommended hotels and restaurants. The Turks are still at the stage of tourism where some of their most evocative sites, such as Aphrodisias, remain difficult of access. The main body of tourists still invades the southern coast from Bodrum to Antalya. Farson, I think, underestimates Side which, though admittedly well established on the tourist scene, can still offer superb Greco-Roman ruins through which one can wander alone at dawn or midnight. But

Farson is eloquent in his appraisal of the province of Van - though denied a glimpse of one of the fabled golden cats noted for fishing in the lake there. He certainly makes one long to see the early Armenian church on the island of Akdamar in Lake Van with its vivid biblical scenes and animals carved on the exterior walls - particularly appropriate, as Farson points out, situated as it is in the supposed vicinity of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat.

From personal experience I can sympathize with Farson's account of the pitfalls in acquiring property, involving endless litigation and claims from obscure relatives (the same nightmare procedures prevail in Greece). But when one has succumbed to a country's spell (and the Turks are among the most hospitable and charming people in the world) these battles, though frustrating, finally do nothing to damp one's enthusiasm.

least, that it would be unwise to visit either Kansai ("where much industrial and commercial strength is concentrated") or Kyoto ("a very easy city to negotiate") without understanding the differences between the Kama-kura and Muromachi periods. Had I read those pages 11 years ago, I would have been able to follow the plot of *Shogun* when the film was shown on television.

John Randle and Mariko Watanabe clearly intend to help the traveller to Japan. That is the purpose of the book which they have produced together and I have no doubt that they have succeeded in their objective. *Coping with America* and *Coping with Russia* are no doubt helpful too. But they give the impression of wanting to amuse as much as they want to inform. Apart from the cartoons in *Coping with America* (largely taken from *Punch* and the *New Yorker*) they fail in the former objective. And the pursuit of that objective means that the other is only partly realized.

novelist such as himself who delights in Dickensian theatre. The essay concludes with a number of "absurd, hilarious, pathetic, mysterious" encounters that would provide rich material for a Wilson novel. He catches perfectly the usually courteous, if sometimes fretful, didacticism of Indians, no doubt absorbed in part from missionary teachers in the past. When Wilson agrees that something might be as his informant tells him, he gets the answer: "No, no. Not might be. I don't allow might be. I am a Christian. When I say so, it is so."

Almost comparable in interest are the two pieces, dating from 1957, on Japan. But where as India has hardly changed since Wilson wrote of it, Japan has done so dramatically, acquiring in a mere thirty years or so not merely the material trappings of the West but also, on a more profound level, a sense of self-identity, lacking in the immediate aftermath of defeat, and an unshakeable, some would say, arrogant, self-confidence. More than once Wilson remarks on the Japanese desire to please. But a desire that once sprang from an oppressive sense of what was owed to others over springs from a liberating sense of what is owed to themselves. Wilson writes of the Japanese "fighting a battle for a good life in a country terrifyingly isolated, overpopulated, undernourished and traditionally sad". That battle cannot be said to have been wholly won, but it is now nearer to being won than in many countries of the West.

From time to time, as in his dealings with a palpably insouciant Yevushenko or an aggressively bitchy Mishima, Sir Angus shows an unaccustomed asperity; but for the most part the tone of his book is kind, tolerant, relaxed and humane.

Minding about killing

Jeremy Waldron

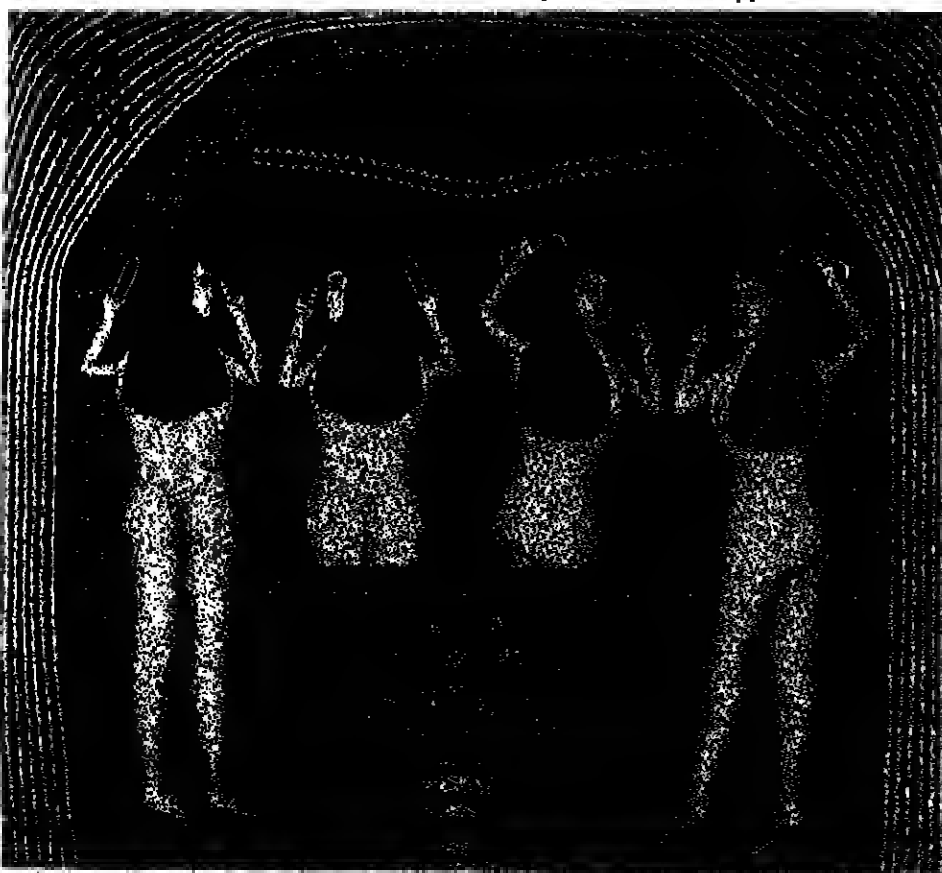
ANTHONY KENNY
The Ivory Tower: Essays in philosophy and public policy
137pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15.
0631 139850

Is nuclear deterrence morally defensible? One line of argument against it goes as follows. Many of the weapons in our deterrent arsenal are aimed at cities, so that if used their effect would be to kill millions of civilians instantaneously and condemn millions of others to a lingering death or an even worse life in the aftermath of a holocaust. Since most of those who would be killed are innocent (not in the sense of having led blameless lives but in the sense of posing no threat to those who killed them), the use of these weapons would be the gravest moral wrong – that of deliberately slaughtering the innocent. Now, if it is wrong to do something, it is surely wrong to threaten to do that thing. So our strategy of nuclear deterrence, involving as it does an implicit threat to massacre the inhabitants of Soviet cities, in certain circumstances, cannot be morally justified.

This argument is developed forcefully in a number of the articles reprinted in Anthony Kenny's collection *The Ivory Tower*. (The second half of the book is entirely devoted to philosophical reflection on the ethics of war.) It relies on two crucial points. First, there is the argument that, if doing X is wrong, then threatening to do X is wrong. Kenny thinks this holds, not in virtue of the sort of speech-act threatening is, but, more convincingly, in virtue of the sort of intentions those who want their threats taken seriously must have: "Everyone involved in the military chain of command from the top downwards must be prepared to give or execute the order to massacre millions of non-combatants if ever the government decides that that is what is to be done." Of course the willingness to murder is reluctant and conditional; but willingness (indeed training and a high state of readiness) there must be, in order for the murderous threat to be effective. The second crucial point is the assumption that it is wrong in all circum-

stances to kill or hold oneself willing to kill the innocent. I guess that if there are to be any moral absolutes, this is a good candidate, but a utilitarian might insist that even murdering the innocent could be justified to avoid a greater number of innocent deaths. Kenny denies that we in fact face this option: the very worst choice we face would be between killing the innocent and submitting to communist rule or Soviet blackmail. But suppose he is wrong about that: would we be justified in threatening to use our missiles if that were the only way to deter nuclear attack? Anyone who thinks we would not must be able to point to a morally relevant difference between killing X and failing to save Y from a death which is not itself one's doing. An appeal to the law of God along the lines of the earliest of the articles published

here will not do: God's laws are not arbitrary, and a reason for thinking there is no moral difference is a reason for thinking the theologians who place any weight on this distinction in their interpretation of God's law have got it wrong. The only plausible difference that has been suggested in the philosophical literature (by Thomas Nagel and others) is that the action of killing – and indeed threatening to kill – involves aiming at evil and therefore having one's action guided by evil; and that this is true even when one pursues the evil of killing only as a means to the prevention of some greater harm. Failing to save an innocent from such an attack does not involve the orientation of human intentionality to evil in this way, though of course it may be culpable for other reasons. Kenny himself does not pursue this line of



Morris Hirshfeld's "Two Women in Front of a Mirror" (1943) is reproduced from Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation by Angelika Zander Ridenstine (912pp with 698 black-and-white and 96 colour illustrations. New York: Abrams. \$85. 08109 0989 8).

Into the beyond

David E. Cooper

HILARY LAWSON
Reflexivity: The post-modern predicament
132pp. Hutchinson. Paperback. £5.50.
009 1608619

This book is one in a series with the laudable aim of introducing important concepts and figures in recent Continental thought to readers whose background is in analytic philosophy. Reflexivity is characterized at the outset in two ways, though the distinction is often forgotten in the bulk of the book. It is, first, "a form of self-awareness" by philosophers of their own activities; and, second, the feature of claims, like "This sentence is false", whose truth implies their falsity or absurdity. Philosophers' self-awareness can indeed be induced by the seemingly paradoxical nature of claims they make. One thinks, for instance, of the Principle of Verifiability's apparent violation of the criterion it lays down. Hilary Lawson's special concern is with reflexivity as discussed and manifested in the writings of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida. It is not transparent why these three are chosen, aside from their being paradigmatically "Continental"; but Lawson thinks they have at least the following in common: an especially acute ear for reflexive problems in philosophical writings, including their own; a sense that the fundamental reflexive problem is that of the philosopher's "entanglement" in the language he needs to use; the alleged virtue of "harnessing" and "using" reflexivity, instead of avoiding or dissolving it; and a millenarian intimation of a "post-modern" age – a "beyond" – in which all past philosophy, their own included, will have

"deconstructed" itself under the pressure of its reflexivity.

The chapters devoted to the trio have a common shape. An account of how the thinker attacks other writers for their paradoxes is followed by a description of how he then recognizes and responds to the reflexive nature of his own thought. The dominant figure is Derrida. Not only is the terminology throughout his, but the other members of the trio are read through his eyes. This is unfortunate since, especially in the case of Nietzsche, Lawson's account reproduces Derrida's parody. Nietzsche is represented as a total sceptic and relativist, but he is neither of these. He does not doubt the availability of knowledge and truth; rather, such notions are absurd when understood in terms of a relation to an imagined "real" world that transcends how we speak and conceive. Understood properly, however – in pragmatic terms, that is – knowledge and truth are not only available, but necessary for existence. Nor is Nietzsche a moral relativist, arguing on the contrary that all systems of evaluation deserving the name "moral" must be essentially similar – which is why, "the higher man" needs to go "beyond" morality. Since Nietzsche is not embroiled in the reflexive paradoxes Lawson thinks, the account of how he "responds" to them – through an alleged indulgence in "anarchic assertion" of competing claims, none of which is supposed to "stand" – is nugatory. It is also an insulting thing to say of the philosopher who regarded it as a "conspicuous" abdication of "the intellectual conscience" to hold anything without "first having given an account of the final and most certain reasons 'pro and con'".

Heidegger fares little better, for while the section on his later writings is as opaque as they are, the exposition of *Being and Time* is marred

by serious mistakes. In particular Lawson inexorably equates Heidegger's ontological distinction with that between presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand and, even worse, with one between the "common sense, everyday" world and "the world of Being". Heidegger is quite explicit that Being-present-at-hand is an ontological characteristic; and a nuclear physicist, though giving ontic descriptions, is clearly not describing the world of common sense. Lawson is better in his account of Derrida's critique of Husserlian meanings, the "given", and the "metaphysics of presence" – though what it unintentionally reveals is that one reason why Derrida has made only a small splash among analytic philosophers is that much of his critique is overfamiliar to readers of Wittgenstein, Sellars and Quine. The description of Derrida's "positive" views – of *différance*, *traces*, etc. – is too close to Derrida's own exposition to convert those who suspect that this part of Derrida is the work of a fraud or clown. It is not helpful to be told, for example, that *différance* is "not a further presence that lies behind presence and absence, but a non-originary origin that enables presence and non-presence to occur".

Lawson does not, then, provide illuminating, or even safe, accounts of his chosen trio. Nor does he seriously get to grips with his chosen topic. To begin with, the supposed reflexive paradoxes remain underdescribed. A claim like "The limits of language are the limits of my world" requires interpretation and a sorting of various possible senses, and not the bland assumption that it is "self-deconstructing". The author is insensitive, moreover, to the variety of difficulties to be found among problems of a broadly reflexive kind. Thus it is surely wrong to hold that Wittgenstein's claim about the limits of language is "like the liar

argument; if there is a fault in the book it is almost all of the articles leave the foundations of his views unexplored, but they make it admirably clear how considerations like this fit into the complex debate about nuclear policy.

The murder in the first half of the book is a murder in a somewhat different sense: considerations of intention, responsibility and psychiatric expertise in common law. But though the context is different, the approach is the same. The recent case of the South Wales miners, convicted initially of derelict for dropping a block of polystyrene on a fatally injured driver, raises questions about the state of mind that must exist before conviction for murder can be justified. Is it intention to kill? Or is the intention to grievously injure sufficient? Kenny does examine the miners' case, but in his discussion of the House of Lords decision in *Hyman* he argues again that it is willingness to kill, either the direct intention to kill or the intention to create a serious risk of death, that is crucial to the specific wrongness of murder. Unfortunately, Kenny's formula does quite cover the case of the person who hires an aircraft in flight purely in order to obtain insurance money on the aircraft. Though the deaths of the passengers will be a result, it is not his intention to kill them, nor the risk of their death. (He is not someone who sets out to create a risk of death as part of a terrorizing strategy.) To this case, Kenny says that "the least we should be taken to justify the (direct) killing about a state of affairs from which knows death will certainly follow". But he does not defend this claim, or make clear how case differs morally. (I know it differs from that of a man who simply wants to die) away from a dying person who alone could save, knowing that the least that person will certainly follow.

As an epilogue, Kenny includes a chapter delivered at the University of Cape Town in 1984, on the subject of academic freedom. There is not space to discuss the argument in this piece in detail. Suffice it to say that it should be required reading for all those who believe that threats to academic freedom posed only by persons and institutions outside

Many-headed history

Geoffrey Griffin

E. EASTERLING and B. M. W. KNOX (Editors)
The Cambridge History of Classical Literature
Volume One: Greek Literature
Cambridge University Press. £47.50.
0521 210429

The Cambridge History of Classical Literature had a long and difficult gestation. The first volume, on Latin literature, appeared in reverse order, Homer-fashion in 1982. The editors of the present book "thank the contributors most warmly for their patience in the face of frustrating delays". One of their writers put his piece with the footnote, poignant in its evoked pathos, "This chapter was written in the House of Lords decision in *Hyman*". Scholars writing from North America are notably more numerous than in the Latin volume, producing about half the book. That either the direct intention to kill or the intention to create a serious risk of death, that is crucial to the specific wrongness of murder. Unfortunately, Kenny's formula does quite cover the case of the person who hires an aircraft in flight purely in order to obtain insurance money on the aircraft. Though the deaths of the passengers will be a result, it is not his intention to kill them, nor the risk of their death. (He is not someone who sets out to create a risk of death as part of a terrorizing strategy.) To this case, Kenny says that "the least we should be taken to justify the (direct) killing about a state of affairs from which knows death will certainly follow". But he does not defend this claim, or make clear how case differs morally. (I know it differs from that of a man who simply wants to die) away from a dying person who alone could save, knowing that the least that person will certainly follow.

Like its Latin companion, this book opens with a substantial chapter on books and readers. The subject is no doubt basic to Greek literature, but not obviously more so, for instance, than religion. The change is not taken to give an explicit discussion of the nature and evidence of the half-dozen literary dialects of Greek. Their existence is an important fact, of the scattered allusions to one or another dialect do not add up to an intelligible account. This is one of the many things on which the book might have been more helpful. It consists most entirely of names, and the reader looks in vain for such entries as dialect, epigram, tragedy, myth, parody, pastiche, and so on – all of which, with many other subjects, are discussed somewhere in the book. The choice of contributors has been made wisely, and the general standard is high. A few chapters are on the dull side, but it cannot be said that some Greek writers themselves are dull. There is a great deal of biographical information, which will be useful without acknowledgment not only to students but also by writers and scholars. The learned work of this century is, by

and large, listed. Sometimes the bulk of it is oppressive, and many readers will wish that they had been given some guidance among the books and articles named, even at the cost of reducing their quantity. The bibliography on the Presocratics opens with a dispassionate listing of twenty-five general books about them; that on Tragedy runs to fourteen large and closely packed pages. Are all these works, the reader wonders, presented as being of identical interest and quality?

The editors do not say how they define literature. A certain romanticism is detectable, inclining to favour poetry at the expense of prose, lyric at the expense of other forms of poetry, and (perhaps) the fragmentary at the expense of the completely preserved. Early lyric and elegiac poetry, extant almost wholly in fragments, is lovingly treated – 130 pages, and lavish quotations in Greek as well as English. These chapters (J. P. Barron and P. E. Easterling on Archilochus; B. M. W. Knox on Theognis and Solon; Charles Segal on choral lyric; David A. Campbell on monody) add up by themselves to an important book. It is a special bonus that they contain the original and translations of recently discovered poems by Archilochus and Stesichorus. Yet even here it is striking that Pindar, the one great poet whose work survives extensively, receives far less space than Alcman or Stesichorus, of whom we have so much less: nine pages on Pindar, but on Alcman seventeen. That does not, surely, correspond to their relative importance, whether to antiquity, to later European literature, or to us.

Literature has evidently not much to do with ideas. All the chapters on philosophy are short and squeezed. Plotinus, the greatest philosopher of late antiquity, is polished off in one page (the sordid poet Elipponax, of whom we have a few cryptic and indecent scraps, gets seven), and Plato has to be compressed into seventeen, the same allocation as Alcman. The chapter opens:

To treat of Plato as a writer without mentioning his philosophy would be as helpful as to describe a lion by an account of its skin. Yet his philosophy cannot be reduced to a few paragraphs, all for which this book could have room. So what will be said of it will

be simplified and selective, the minimum needed to explain the form and nature of his writings.

The implications are considerable, and Plato, so treated, cuts a poor figure. It is a striking example of this approach that A. W. Bulloch can find it natural to write, of the *Aetia* of Callimachus, that "it is hardly too much to say that the *Aetia* is second in historical importance only to the Homeric poems". Naturally one has to have ruled out Plato and Aristotle before one can say something like that. Callimachus, in fact, gets twenty-two pages, and highly encomiastic ones: he is praised as "an outstanding intellect" with "a penetrating intelligence", whose poems show not only "stunning narrative power" but also "moral seriousness", dealing with "serious and at times disturbing issues". The treatment of this poet contains good things, but its tone seems decidedly odd. Callimachus, though learned and talented, was in important ways a frivolous writer, and it is a strange conception of literature which heaps such praise on him. What superlatives are left for Plato or Aristotle, who really do possess such qualities? In this book there is not even room to mention "Platonic love" or Plato's hostility to poetry.

Plutarch is another writer whose treatment is stepmotherly. Four pages is an inadequate allowance for one of the most important, as well as one of the most voluminous, of ancient writers. Less than a page on the *Lives*! The book is actually more interested in Isocrates (four and a half pages), who is discussed without a hint that he is one of the great bores of history. Minor prose writers, too, are treated on a scale very different from that which is applied to minor writers of verse. The Presocratic philosophers are despatched so summarily that the Milesians fall through the net, and allusions later in the book to Thales hang in the air. The Hippocratic medical works barely rate a mention, despite their interest for the history of ideas as well as the development of the language.

Homer is well handled by G. S. Kirk, who is especially interesting on the *Odyssey*. Lyric, as we have seen, comes off very handsomely. The major writers of the fifth century are generally well done, too. There is a general piece on

Tragedy in Performance by John Gould; Aeschylus is treated by R. P. Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles by P. E. Easterling, Euripides by B. M. W. Knox. E. W. Handley writes on Comedy, and Henry R. Immerwahr on Herodotus and Thucydides. Reviewers of the Latin volume criticized its chronological eccentricities – Pliny the Younger before Pliny the Elder, and Latin literature coming to an end with Apuleius, "an aesthetic rather than a historical decision by the Editor". This volume repeats that "for the literary critic the historical questions are not the most important ones", but it does not give the same impression of disregard for temporal succession or historical context.

The treatment of Tragedy is to some extent an unexplained exception to the view that historical questions are not very important. We find again the familiar struggle to make sense of the peculiarly unknowable prehistory of the form, with horse-tailed satyrs, Arion and his dithyrambs, and the dispiriting announcement that "the evidence of Aristotle's *Poetics* is not lightly to be disregarded". O for the courage to disregard it! We also get the usual lecture on the height of the buskins worn by actors in the fifth century (not so lofty as some suppose), and the statement that we must ask just how the plays were originally put on, "or else the texts of Greek tragedy must remain inert For the texts are essentially scripts for performance, and the style and context of that performance are fundamental to our understanding of the texts themselves". But then, the Theatre is different, a no-go area for the agents of literary theory.

Late writers also, on the whole, are well dealt with. The most striking contradiction between contributors comes here, on the respective merits of late writers of prose. G. W. Bowersock, the most elegant stylist among the contributors ("Ghosts appear to arouse his deepest emotions", he says of the poet Oppian), takes the line of the respectable in antiquity, preferring the unremitting seriousness of Aelius Aristides and his kind to the levity of Lucian: "Viewed as a whole, the achievement of Aristides is prodigious The modern admiration for Lucian, often coupled with denigration of Aristides and his imitators, is a grave impediment to the understanding of Greek literature under Rome and Byzantium." Ten pages later E. L. Bowie reports that "Lucian's works seem at first sight to come from a different world from other *belles lettres*, just as they indisputably outclass them in quality." He goes on to contrast Lucian with the "pretentious shallowness" of the sophists – including Aristides. The reader laughs; and laughs are not too numerous in a book like this. But a question lingers: if literary history is being written in so frankly subjective a spirit – if, perhaps, it is inevitably so subjective – is there not something a little suspicious in presenting it in two stately volumes with the style, and to a great extent with the contents, of a work of reference?

Moderately obvious

Frederic J. Saunders

VON LEYDEN
Equality and Justice: His political philosophy
Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521 281512

R. Dods once remarked that if the love and knowledge of Greek literature were ever to die in this country it would be because they had been suffocated by the industry of its exponents. W. von Leyden devotes a book of 145 pages to a close analysis of a topic which crops up in an explicit form in only a handful of Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*. The effort has been worth while?

Very much so for the problem of reconciling equality and justice is among the knottiest in political theory and practice. Both Plato and Aristotle were exercised by it, and had strong views on one crucial point: we should refuse to say that truth with crude "arithmetical" equality, where each man counts for no more or less than his fellow – "one man, one vote" as we say. (Von Leyden analyses this Rorty remark, they seem to need no need to say it.) True equality, they agreed, is "proportionate" or "battered" equality: it would give a greater share than others to the benefits, particularly power, of a political system, according to some ratio of desert. Plato said: "The most genuine equality is not that which requires the wisdom and judgment of men to treat men unequally; we need to treat them fairly. But this criteria is complex. Faced with the immensity of interrelated occupations and functions, political theorists hunger for criteria

which are not arbitrary; while the practical politician – for whose benefit the *Politics* was after all written – must find at least some rough and ready principles of equitable inequality which are intellectually acceptable to the inhabitants of his state, or at any rate to a majority of them.

Such an enterprise is of course calculated to annoy many powerful interests. In ancient Greece, as Aristotle glumly noted, democrats believed that since they themselves were all equal in one respect (free status), they were equal absolutely. Oligarchs thought that since they themselves were unequal in one respect (wealth) they were unequal (superior) absolutely. From his distinctively teleological standpoint (about which von Leyden has surprisingly little to say), Aristotle argued that the best attainable environment, not merely for "living", but for "living well", would be an "intermediate" constitution. In which political power would be vested in a large and modestly prosperous middle class, with a settled and moderate way of life. The adult males (the exclusion of women from office he took for granted) would rule *equally*; that is to say by turns, in virtue of their *equal* political wisdom. What could be more just?

These proposals were a valiant try, and had some influence on later political theory; but even they do not escape the charge of being arbitrary and imprecise. So could not they, and indeed others, be made less arbitrary by being anchored to (say) natural law? There is no salvation for Aristotle here. As von Leyden puts it, "Perhaps his greatest misconception is the claim that laws of proper conduct (i.e. laws requiring men to behave in certain ways), are like laws *formulating* (not *really* governing) the regularities of nature, and that both may be ascertained by rational inference."

Von Leyden revealingly prays in old certain passages of *Physics* and *Metaphysics* on the

logic of the "common terms", of which equality is one. He sees "a close and significant parallel between his views on the structure of a community, and the logic of common terms in relation to class-words". A farmer and a shoemaker may be measured against each other, and treated equally or unequally, only in respect of something *other* than their being farmer or shoemaker, e.g. in their wealth or character or political wisdom, where they may be assessed on a common scale. Political equality and inequality thus have many different (and competing) contexts in the state, and exhibit a different sense in each. The insight is fundamental, as von Leyden properly stresses: it is typical of Aristotle's sensitivity to "whole ranges and levels of possible distinctions". But does it not have a touch of the obvious? At any rate, in a polymath like Aristotle it is good to see in logic some clear spin-off for politics.

These and a host of other problems try out for analysis in depth, which Aristotle did not undertake. With calm patience, von Leyden picks his way through the text. It is a revelation to see what a maze of issues Aristotle's apparently rather simple suggestions open up. Von Leyden's style is, however, is (like Aristotle's own) dryly professional, and hardly makes for a rollicking good read. One fine distinction follows another in relentless order, laced with little of the humour that can make philosophy delightful as well as instructive.

Aristotle emerges from von Leyden's scrutiny with his stature as a political thinker convincingly enhanced; and in the closing pages the ancient philosopher receives considerable tributes from the modern. The *Nicomachean Ethics* has always seemed to provide more than the *Politics* for philosophers to get their teeth into, and has commonly received much more attention. After von Leyden's book, that preference looks rather less justified than it did.

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Making an enemy of man

Igor Hajek

KAREL ČAPEK
War with the Newts
Translated by M. and R. Weatherall.
348pp. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press. \$8.95.
08101 06639
War with the Newts
Translated by Ewald Osers
241pp. Allen and Unwin. Paperback, £2.95.
004 8233080
VLADIMÍR PÁRAL
Válka o mnohoživéřetem
319pp. Československý spisovatel. Kčs 35.

In an age when robots have passed from futuristic fiction into everyday reality, the man who coined the term is remembered more for that single word than for the hundreds of thousands of other words he wrote. Between the wars Karel Čapek was Czechoslovakia's best known author and virtually all that he published was translated into English. But the passage of time has inevitably affected both his popularity abroad and his work itself. His fiction, strongly influenced by relativism and pragmatism, may appear slightly old-fashioned. Even mere dated, alas, seem to be the ideals of tolerance, decency and respect for our fellow beings, human as well as animal, with which it is imbued.

The fact that most of the translations of Čapek's work are by now about fifty years old has not helped. Even the play *R. U. R.* (*Rossum's Universal Robots*) exists in English only in a version adapted to the theatrical tastes and production requirements of the 1920s. More resilient, however, has proved to be a novel often dismissed as journalistic by those who approach Čapek's work from a purely aesthetic

point of view. *War with the Newts* has long been adopted by science fiction followers as a classic, and it is no doubt due to their continued interest that, unlike most of his other books, it has frequently been reprinted, particularly in the United States. Of the two editions under review, that published by Northwestern is yet another reprint of the 1937 English translation, while the Allen and Unwin edition is a new translation by Ewald Osers. Except for one or two small hiccups this is wonderfully smooth; indeed, it reads almost better than the Czech original which is beginning to show its age, and should give the novel a new lease of life. Less successful is the garish cover, which portrays the newts in complete disregard of the author's own description of them. It is a pity too that most of the typographical jokes that were meant to support the impression that the book was a factual reportage from the future have been omitted.

The fact that this new translation has been included in an SF series may be slightly misleading. As Ivan Klima points out in his comprehensive introduction to the American reprint, Čapek turned to science fiction whenever he wanted to pursue a challenging theme. *War with the Newts* was, according to its author, inspired by a passing thought: "You must not think that the evolution that gave rise to us was the only evolutionary possibility on this planet." But the turning of this idea into a novel was influenced by the precarious state of the world in 1935 as well as by Čapek's constant concern that man's insatiable thirst for knowledge combined with his ethical apathy may prove self-destructive.

In the first two-thirds of the novel the story of the discovery of a species of antediluvian newts which have an extraordinary capacity for learning, and of their subsequent exploitation as

cheap labour for underwater construction, is treated wittily and satirically. Rather than a study of the newts themselves, we are given an analysis, still topical today, of human behaviour, both individual and social, of the greed, hypocrisy and ineradicable stupidity that characterize the human race. Things take a sinister turn only in the third part of the book when the billions of fast-proliferating newts organize themselves and start rebuilding the planet. They do so without displaying any direct hostility to humans; in fact, they need people to supply them with the tools and explosives they use to construct illo-supporting shallows out of the existing continents. Mankind receives a generous offer, in return for its co-operation: "You will work with us on the demolition of your world." And as the newts can afford to pay well out of the riches of the oceans, the offer is taken up by many.

Klima observes that in some countries, notably Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, the overall meaning of the novel is simplified by the identification of the newts with the Nazis. This identification is supported by Čapek's allusion to the origins of the Chief Salamander: he is rumoured to be human and his background is conspicuously similar to that of Adolf Hitler. It is true that Čapek viewed with suspicion all absolutist ideologies and universalist movements, and he could hardly not have noticed what was then going on in Germany, less than a hundred miles from where he was writing. However, to reduce the novel to an allegory turns it from a philosophical into a merely political one. The newts, adaptable, clever and mass-oriented beings without art, a sense of history or any conscience, do not differ much from the dehumanized products of civilization who live among us in various disguises: as media intellectuals, fanatical terrorists or

mindless hooligans. They represent the dark side of human nature, with its boundless inventiveness in finding ways to destroy, and its inability to learn from self-induced disaster.

Perdidiſtis uilliamem columbatam is, appropriately enough, also the theme of Vladimir Páral's new novel, *Válka o mnohoživéřetem* (War with the Multibeast), which is dedicated "to humility and love" to the memory of Karel Čapek. Páral, possibly the best and certainly the most popular writer living in Czechoslovakia today, has set his story once again in the north Bohemian city of Ústí nad Labem, some 50 miles from Čapek's home. This time the enemy is not man-made: pollution of the environment. Having reached a certain density, the pollution begins to behave like a primitive organism. At first it forms a cover of the smog stretching over most of the lowlands of Europe; in the second phase large blocks of matter in the shape of giant seals or, significantly, newts, endowed with a collective intelligence, begin to attack people in their search for growth and survival. The only remedy is to stop all the processes that cause pollution. But the battle is not won even after the onslaught has been repulsed. The plot is left by the pollution turns out to be a warning drug with particular effects: it brings out in people's latent dehumanizing qualities — indifference, hedonism, laziness.

Páral concentrates more than Čapek on the ethical aspects of contemporary life and illustrates his thesis by means of individual rather than by the behaviour of states and nations. The novel displays the energy and wit which are typical of most of his work, but it is less like the message which he is attempting to convey, this remarkable writer is denied again to meet with a total lack of interest, at least from British publishers.

one character, an endearingly helpful boy, is carried from one environment to another. Words and phrases have a magic of their own, riddles have to be answered, and things are interpreted, while at one stage a poem by Robert Pinsky's collection *History of the Heart* has to be completed.

Themes and images are combined in a usual extent: the name of the rock group "Tyranny and the Senses" is the first of the generalissimo's prison camps are behind the door which is opened by the word "escape" from them involves freeing a fountain and a soldier turned to stone from a waist down, and so forth. What little remained in the sword-and-sorcery Tolkien world of most adventure novels long since been hyped flat, and Pinsky wisely goes to the springs of his own mind to create now mythical world. The compulsion to get to the goal, common to all adventure games, is so strong as to make the richness of verbal texture, the vividness of incident and the overall impact of the adventure very much depends on the individual adventure.

cy, and works best when it is most "Silently, he got her a glass of milk, passed for milk on their planet."

To Dick, reality itself is a bottle. In "The Exit Door Leads to a Trap," he is trapped by a fake competition for college course, also a fake, containing a trap, into which he falls. The journey is a voyage in "I Hope I Shall Arrive Somewhere," a frenetic autobiographical fragment, describes the paradox of isolation in society. Dick agonizes over the plight of an unpleasant, unfortunate neighbour about to be evicted from his apartment block. In "Chains of Air, Web of Aether" (later subsumed into his last novel but one, *The Divine Invention*) he turns this theme into fiction, setting a lazy man and a dying woman in separate rooms on a violently inhospitable alien world. The device clarifies the pathos and the urgency,

Journals received

Fiction

Modern Fiction Studies
Volume 31, No 3; Autumn 1985
\$12 per year. Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907.

The first issue of *Modern Fiction Studies*, published thirty years ago, concentrated on Joseph Conrad, and that for autumn 1985 is also a Special Issue, devoted to Sinclair Lewis. Celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Lewis's birth, it reminds us, too, that sixty-five years ago *Main Street* was first published; it is fifty-five years since Lewis became the first American recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature, and thirty-four since his death. Moreover, while Lewis's best writing, the 1920s novels *Main Street*, *Rabbit*, *Arrowsmith*, *Elmer Gantry* and *Deadweight*, remain cheaply available in Signet paperbacks, an editorial preface points out that the number of publications on Lewis has fallen significantly in the past decade.

This is a changed cultural climate for a writer who, his biographer, Mark Schorer, claimed, "unquestionably helped us into the imagination of ourselves as did no other writer of the 1920s." And while it should be said at once that this commemorative issue does not by a long chalk represent the best of which *MFS* is demonstrably capable, there are useful illuminations scattered in its pages, and two pieces which must be exempted from the general judgment.

The first of these is the essay printed last year, Roger Forseth's examination of Lewis's ultimately fatal alcoholism. "Over the years the American literary scene has, of course, been suffused with alcohol," but Forseth's understanding is the difficult examination of the complex relationship between chronic alcoholism and literary art. Lewis's "obsessive and unresolved rage against women" is proposed as one element in the problem. That this conflicts with the tone of Bea Knodel's discussion of Lewis's fictional treatment of American marriage — "the pictures with feeling the humiliation of the woman totally dependent on her husband for money" — is evidence either of a commendably permissive editorial policy or of critical uncertainty.

Forseth's variously relate Sinclair Lewis to H.G. Wells, chart his indebtedness to Edith Wharton, his effort upon Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, and his fascination with the figure of Sherlock Holmes. Those are balanced by a later reading of *Deadweight* and also one of *Main Street* as "Lewis's allegory of pioneers and land speculators." But R.A. Davidson's brief presentation of hitherto unpublished letters of early friendship between young "Red" Lewis and Charles and Kathleen Norris is a delightful bonus. An appendix of recent Lewis criticism reminds us that there has been too little to collect the Lewis correspondence; when this is done, Davidson's contribution will receive due recognition.

Colin Nicholson

Drama

Modern Drama
Volume XXVIII, No 1
KCan 17.50 per year. University of Toronto Press, 5201, Dufferin Street, Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3H 5T8.

The quarterly *Modern Drama* claims to be "the only journal focusing exclusively on world drama from 1850 to the present." Most issues are wide-ranging, and its eclecticism makes for some interesting juxtapositions. Articles on French feminist theatre, for example, and on the relation of genre to feminine consciousness have appeared beside an impressively reasoned reassessment of A. Doll's House in which A. R. Quigley shows at work in the play Ibsen's "view of the women's rights movement" as "a problem of mankind in general."

Modern Drama's March 1985 issue, Volume XXVIII, No 1, is one of its annual special numbers, focusing in this case on "Modern Drama and the Media." Christopher C. Hudgins's article is especially useful in showing how a writer's drama exploits subjective perspectives

offered by camera and microphone, and Martin Esslin likewise analyses concisely how conditions within the media affect the visions of playwrights in Britain. Elsewhere, some discussions of relations between stage, screen and radio would benefit from more of the theoretical rigour Benjamin K. Bennett offers in his opening essay. More constant attention to his reminder of "the ontological defectiveness of the dramatic text as merely written or printed and merely read or heard" might also further improve the varied, though generally high, quality of *Modern Drama's* surveys and analyses.

Randall Stevenson

History

The Journal of Modern History
Volume 57, No 3; September 1985
\$27 per year. University of Chicago, Illinois, USA.

This journal has been in existence since 1928. It is well established as one of the world's leading historical reviews, specializing mainly in modern European history from the eighteenth century onwards (although it has had some notable contributions on earlier periods). The pattern is that each number has about three longish articles, often followed by a long review article or two, and then by a large number of book reviews which never fall into the category of the short notice. The *Journal of Modern History* has a style of its own, one that is direct, informative, unpretentious and generous. It is much valued.

An issue which well represents its quality is that for December 1984, which is devoted to political practice during the French Revolution; it has as its main article a piece by Mona Ozouf on the revolutionary discourse. The majority of the contributors are, as usual, American; the atmosphere tends to be dominated by Europe as seen through discerning and knowledgeable American eyes. The September 1985 number contains several pieces that are of typical interest. There is an unusual article by Michael Curtin on the study of manners, in which he discusses both courtesy and etiquette books, with particular reference to women. He suggests that the Victorian etiquette book provided "ladies" with a means of achieving recognition and organizing their ambitions. Then, in addition to contributions on urbanization in Russia and on the development of West Germany since 1945, there are two important review articles. The one considers recent work on Martin Luther. It is a long and detailed study by Jean Wirth of the University of Strasbourg. The other, by Michael Ermarth, surveys aspects of modern European intellectual history, with particular reference to post-structuralism and to the work of Foucault and Derrida. It defines intellectual historians as being particularly sensitive barometers of change within the profession; and it could be said that this journal constantly keeps its readers aware of the developments which are taking place in modern history.

Douglas Johnson

which use oral traditions or early Arabic sources. Recently, however, articles dealing with experiences of particular African communities during the colonial period, based on extensive archival research and usually avoiding polemics, have been most numerous. The book reviews are invaluable. Reviewers are carefully chosen and widely distributed; their work is almost invariably thorough and thoughtful, and sometimes genuinely creative.

Following recent reductions in the resources available for African historical research, the editors have begun to find difficulty in filling quarterly issues with work that satisfies their very high standards. Sometimes they have published special issues arising from international conferences, or other academic events. Volume 26, No 4, consists largely of papers on Africa and the Second World War, originally presented to a conference at the School of Oriental and African Studies in May, 1984; it is of impressive range and interest.

John D. Hargreaves

Theology

Theology
Volume LXXXVIII, January, March, May, July, September and November 1985; Nos 721-6
£10.80 a year for six issues. SPCK, Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DU.

Pleasingly produced inside a pillar-box-red cover, *Theology* is the liveliest of the journals in its field in Britain; and there is a fitness in its being predominantly Anglican, since theologically the country's liveliest denomination is the oldest-sided Church of England. The editors are C of E clerics: Peter Colman, Bishop of Crediton, who superintends the articles and letters; Leslie Houlden, lecturer in New Testament studies at King's College, London, who runs the reviews (which occupy almost half of each issue); and John Drury, Dean of King's College, Cambridge, the consultant member of the triumvirate. Most contributors, like most of the 5,000 customers, are Anglican divines.

The level of conventional faith assumed is low. In the issue of March 1985, Dennis Nineham recurs to R. H. Lightfoot's dejected fifty years ago that the Gospels disclose only the outskirts of Jesus' ways. Nineham finds it established "in the eyes of most competent judges," and foresees disastrous results from the chronic disjunction between sound scholarship and current religious teaching. Radicals of varying depth, like Maurice Wiles and Don Cupitt, are to be found throughout the year as reviewers. But the general tone is not so sceptical as to have held back the Archbishop of Canterbury from contributing to the July number a sermon on the twentieth anniversary of T. S. Eliot's death (and quoting with approval, "Teach us to all still").

The journal keeps a certain journalistic edge. In the September 1985 number, published when the Church of England was electing a new General Synod which would have to decide whether to make priests of women, the two leading pieces bear on that question. Daphne Hampson suggests that feminists, finding Christianity tied to symbols which make God male, have to move beyond it to "a non-anthropomorphic understanding of God." John Austio Baker, Bishop of Salisbury, argues that in true Catholic theology Christ is present at the Eucharist not so much in the eucharistic minister as in the elements, consecrated by a trinitarian God; and that the ordination of women to the Church of England priesthood would be positively helpful in making that clear.

In the November number, Norman Pittenger takes the "process" theologian's line that "the event of Jesus Christ" was not unique, but only "the classical instance" of God's continuing activity in human life: many non-Christian movements also help in the divine process of bringing deliverance to humankind through love. He brings the journal back to its central business of unassertive God-talk.

John Whale

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In *Slow Church Restored, 1846-1866* (220pp. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, for the Lincoln Record Society. £19.50. 0 901053 39 8) Mark Spurrell has gathered the frequently heated correspondence surrounding the restoration of one of the most important of all surviving Anglo-Saxon churches. The work was carried out under the supervision of John Loughborough Pearson.